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The Woodlanders.

by

Thomas Hardy.

Chapter I.

The rambler who, for old association or else reasons, should trace the forsaken coach-road running almost in a meridional line from Bristol to the South shore of England, would find himself during the latter half of his journey, in the vicinity of some extensive woodlands, interspersed with apple-orchards. Here the trees, timber or fruit-bearing as the case maybe, make the wayside hedges ragged by their drip & shade; sheltering over the road with casual horizontality, as if they found the insubstantial air an adequate support for their limbs. At one place, where a hill it is crossed, the largest of the woods is shows itself bisected by the highway as a head of thick hair is bisected by the white line of its parting. The spot is lonely.

The physiognomy of a deserted highway expresses solitude to a degree that is not reached by mere dales or downs, & the specks a stillness more emphatic than that of glades & pools. The contrast tomb-like

of what is with what might be, probably accounts for this. To step, for instance, at the place under notice, from the hedge of the ~~copse~~ plantation into the adjoining pale thoroughfare, & stand pause amid its emptiness for a moment, was to exchange by the act of a single stride the simple absence of human companionship for an inclusion of the forlorn.

At this spot, on the lowering evening of a bygone winter's day, there stood a man who had entered upon the scene much in the aforesaid manner. Alighting into the road from a stile hard by, he, though by no means a chosen vessel for impressions, was temporarily influenced by some such feeling of being suddenly more alone than ~~ever~~ before he had emerged upon the highway.

It could be seen by a glance at his ~~travelled~~ rather genial style of dress that he did not belong to the country proper; & from his air, after a while, that though there might be a sombre beauty ~~characteristics~~ in the scenery, ~~place~~, & music in the breeze, & a wan procession of coaching Ghosts in the sentiment of his ~~the~~ old turnpike-road, he was mainly puzzled about the way. The deadly weis ~~waste~~ of work that had been expended in climbing that hill, the blistered soles that had trodden it, & the tears that welled it, were not his concern; for fate had given him no time for ~~these things~~ anything but practical.

He looked north, & south, & ~~tapped impatiently~~ mechanically prodded with his walking-stick. A closer glance at his face, corroborated the testimony of his clothes. It was self-complacent, yet there was ~~much~~ apparent ground

to the eye of the magician in character, if not to the ordinary
for such complacence. Nothing irradiated it; the expression on
observer, the expression enthroned there was
~~throned there indefeasibly being~~, absolute submission to a belief
in a little assortment of formalities & habitudes.

At first not a soul appeared who could enlighten him as he
desired, ~~Be~~ or seemed likely to appear that night. But presently
a slight noise of labouring wheels, & the steady dig of a horse's shoe-
tips, became audible; & there loomed in the notch of the hill & plan-
tation that the road formed here at the summit a carrier's van
drawn by a single horse. When it got nearer he said with some
relief & hurriedly "'Tis Mrs Dollery's – this will help me."

The vehicle was half full of passengers, mostly women.
He held up his stick at its approach, & the woman who was
driving drew rein.

"I've been trying to find a short way to Little Hintock this
last half hour, Mrs Dollery," he said. "But though I've been to
Great Hintock &
Hintock House half-a-dozen times, I am at fault about the small village.
if you can help me I dare say."
as she went to Great Hintock

She assured him that she could – that her van passed near
it – that it was only up the lane that branched out of the lane
into which she was about to turn – just ahead. "Though", con-
tinued Mrs Dollery, "'tis such a little small place that, as a
town

town gentleman, you'd need have a candle-&-lantern to find it if ye don't know where 'tis. Be dad, I would not live there if they'd pay me to. Now at Great Hintock you do see the world a bit."

He mounted & sat beside her, with his feet outside, where they were ever & anon brushed over by the horse's tail.

This van, driven formerly by Mrs Dollery, was rather a moveable attachment of the roadway than an appliances object, to those who knew it well. The old horse, whose hair was of the roughness & colour of heather, whose leg-joints, shoulders, & hoops were distorted by harness & drudgery from colthood, though if all had their rights like ought, symmetrical in outline, to have been picking the herbage of some Eastern plain instead of tugging here, had trodden this road almost daily for twenty years. Even his subjection was not made conspicuous enough, for the harness being too short his tail was not drawn through the crupper, so that the breeching slipped awkwardly to one side. He knew every subtle incline of the seven or eight miles of ground between Hintock & Sherton-Abbas — the market-town to which he journeyed — as accurately as any surveyor could have learnt it by a Dumpy level.

The vehicle had a square black tilt which nodded with the motion of the wheels, & at a point in it over the driver's head was a hook to which the reins were hitched at times, when

they formed a catenary curve from the horse's shoulders. Somewhere about the axles was a loose chain, whose only known purpose was to clink as it went. Mrs Dollery, having to hop up & down many times in the service of her passengers, wore, especially in windy weather, short leggings under her gown for modesty's sake, & instead of a bonnet a felt hat tied down with a handkerchief, to guard against the ear-ache to which she was frequently subject. In the rear of the van was a glass window, which she cleaned with her pocket-handkerchief every market-day before starting. Looking at the van from the back the spectator could thus see, through its interior, a square piece of the same sky & landscape that he saw without, but intruded on by the profiles of the seated passengers; who, as they rumbled onward, their lips moving, & heads nodding in animated private converse, ~~their fingers~~ remained in happy unconsciousness that their mannerisms & facial peculiarities were sharply defined to the public eye.

This hour of coming home from market was the happy one, if not the happiest, of the week for them. Snugly ensconced under the tilt they could forget the sorrows of the world without, & survey life, & re-capitulate the incidents of the day with placid smiles.

The passengers in the back part formed a group to themselves, & while the new-comer spoke to the proprietress they indulged in

~~constantly~~ ~~in the daily~~ ~~it~~

'Tis a man ~~who~~ who has more to talk about

than he does ~~with~~ ~~he turns~~ ~~suddenly~~ ~~one of us~~ a man

black coat, ~~scarf~~ ~~scarf~~

good

Is some type, how he really does ~~it~~ ~~light~~ foot -

Such like ~~I see~~ somebody like I see him in Abbey Street before

now? What business ~~can~~ ~~he~~ ~~has~~ such a dandy

here at such a time?

a confidential chat about him as about other people, which ~~was~~ rendered inaudible ~~by~~ the noise of the van ~~to~~ Timothy & Mrs Dolloby sitting forward.

"'Tis Barber ~~Brooke~~ Percombe - he got the waxen woman in his window Percombe, that's ~~out here~~ at the top of Abbey Street." said one. "What business can bring him from his shop out here at this time; & not a journeyman hair-cutter, but a master-barber. What's left off his pole because 'tis not genteel?"

They listened to his conversation, but Mr ~~Brooke~~ Percombe, though he had nodded & spoken genially, seemed indisposed to gratify the curiosity which he had aroused; & the unrestrained flow of ideas which had animated the inside of the van before his arrival was checked thenceforward.

Thus they rode on till they turned into a half-invisible little lane, whence, as it reached the verge of an eminence, could be discerned in the dusk ~~gardens & orchards~~ about half a mile gardens & orchards to the right, sunk in a concave, & as it were snipped out of the woodland. From this ~~secluded~~ self-contained place rose, in stealthy silence tall stems of smoke, which the eye of imagination could trace downward to their root on quiet hearthstones festooned overhead with hams & flitches. It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, & more passivity than meditation: where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses, & results in ~~to the production of~~ inferences wildly imaginative, yet where, from time to time, no less than in other places, dramas

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"A very clever & learned young Doctor who, they say, is in league with the Devil, lives in the place you be going to – not because there's anybody for 'n to cure there, but because 'tis the middle of his district"

The observation was flung at the barber by one of the women (bourgeois gentleman) at parting, as a last attempt to get at his errand that way.

But he made no reply; but without further pause ——

of a grandeur & unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely knit interdependence of the lives therein.

This place was the Little Hintock of the master-baker's search. The coming night gradually obscured the smoke of the chimneys, but the position of this sequestered little world could still be distinguished by a few faint lights, winking more or less ineffectually through the leafless boughs of the undiscerned songsters, who bore, in the form of balls of feathers, at roost among them.

Out of the lane followed by the van branched a yet smaller lane, at the corner of which the stranger alighted, Mrs Dollery's van going on to the larger village, whose superiority to the despised one as an exemplar of the world's movements was, not particularly apparent in its means of approach,

~~X. Without having enlightened his acquaintance on his errand this way at last a house, the~~ plump pedestrian ~~& paced~~ towards the umbrageous nook ~~hamlet~~, & paced cautiously over the dead leaves which nearly buried the road or street of the hamlet. As very few people except themselves passed this way after a majority of dark, the denizens of Little Hintock deemed window-curtains unnecessary; and on this account the new comer Fercombe made it his business to stop opposite the casements of each cottage that he came to, with a demeanour which showed that he was endeavouring to conjecture, from the persons

& things he observed within, the whereabouts of somebody or other who resided here.

Only the smaller dwellings interested him: one or two houses, whose size, antiquity & rambling appurtenances signified that notwithstanding their remoteness they must formerly have been, if they were not still, inhabited by people of a certain social standing, being neglected by him entirely. Smells of pomace, & the hiss of fermenting ~~liquor~~ cider, which reached him from the back-quarters of other tenements, revealed the recent occupation of some of the inhabitants, & joined with the scent of decay from the perishing leaves underfoot.

Half a dozen dwellings were passed without result. The next, ~~interior as seen~~ which stood opposite a tall tree, was in an exceptional state of radiance, the flickering brightness from the inside shining up the chimney & making a luminous mist of the emerging smoke. The interior, as seen through the window, caused him to draw up with a terminative air & watch. The house was rather large for a cottage & the door, which opened immediately into the living-room, stood ajar, so that a riband of light fell through the opening into the dark atmosphere without. Every now & then a moth, decrepit from the late season, would flit for a moment across the outcoming rays & disappear again into the night.

Chapter II.

In the room from which this cheerful blaze proceeded he beheld a girl seated on a willow chair, & busily occupied

by the light of the fire, which was ample, & of wood. With a bill-hook in one hand, & a leather glove, much too large for her, on the other, she was making spars – such as are used by thatchers – with great rapidity. She wore a leather apron for this purpose, which was also much too large for her figure. On her left hand lay a bundle of the straight smooth sticks called spar-gads – the raw material of her manufacture: on her right a heap of chips & ends, the refuse with which the fire was maintained: in front a pile of the finished articles – To produce them she took up each gad, looked critically at it from end to end, cut it to length, split it into four, & sharpened each of the quarters with dexterous blows which brought it to a triangular point precisely resembling that of a bayonet.

Beside her, in case she might require more light, a brass candlestick stood on a little round table, curiously formed of an old coffin-stool, with a deal top nailed on, the white surface of the latter contrasting oddly with the black carved oak of the substructure. The social position of the household in the past was almost as definitely shown by the presence of this article as that of an esquire or nobleman by his old helmets & shields. It had been customary for every well-to-do village, whose tenure was by copy of court-roll, or in any way more permanent than that of the mere cotter, to keep a pair of these stools for the use of his own dead:

but for the last generation or two a feeling of carpe diem had led to the discontinuance of the custom, & the stools were frequently made use of ~~there~~ in the manner described

The young woman laid down the bill-hook for a moment, & examined the palm of her right hand, which unlike the other was unglooved, & showed little roughness or hardness about it. The palm was red & blistering, as if this present occupation were not frequent enough with her to subdue it to what it worked in. As with so many right hands born to manual labour, there was nothing in its fundamental shape to bear out the physiological conventionalism that gradations of birth, gentle or mean, show themselves primarily in the form of this member. Nothing but a cast of the die of destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tools & the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or swept the string, had they only been set to do it in good time.

Her ~~features~~ face had the usual fulness of expression which is developed by a life of solitude. Where the eyes of a multitude beat ~~constantly~~ like waves upon the countenance they seem to wear away its individuality; ~~or waves sound off boundless~~ but in the still water of privacy every tentacle of feeling & sentiment shoots out in visible luxuriance, to be interpreted as readily as a child's book by an intruder. In years she was no more than nineteen or twenty; ~~or twenty-one~~ but the necessity of taking thought to

at a too early period of life had forced the provisional curves of her child-head's face to a premature finality. Thus she had but little pretension to beauty; save in one prominent particular, her hair. (Its colour was, roughly speaking, & as seen here by fire-light,) Its abundance made it almost unmanageable; ~~and white~~ brown; but careful notice, or an observation by day, would have revealed that its true shade was a rare & beautiful approximation to chestnut.

On this one bright gift of Time to the particular victim of this now ~~before us~~ the newcomer's eyes were fixed; mean while the fingers of her right hand mechanically played over something sticking up from his waistcoat pocket — the bows of a pair of scissors — ~~which~~ whose polish caught & made them feebly responsive to the light from within. In this her present be-holder's ~~senses~~ mind the sight & scene formed by the girlish spar-maker composed itself into a post-Raffaelite picture of extremest quality, wherein the girl's hair alone, as the focus of observation, was depicted with intensity & distinctness, & the her face, shoulders, hands, & figure in general, being a blurred mass of unimportant detail, lost in haze & obscurity.

He hesitated no longer, but tapped at the door & entered. The young woman turned at the crunch of his boots on the sanded floor, & exclaiming, "Oh Mr Percombe — how you frightened me!" quite lost her colour for a moment.

He replied,

"You should shut your door – then you'd hear folk open it."

"I can't", she said. "The chimney smokes so. Mr Pereombe, you look as unnatural out of your shop as a canary in a thorn hedge. Surely you have not come out here on my account – for –"

"Yes – to have your answer about this." He touched her head with his cane & she winced..... "Do you agree?" he continued "It is necessary that I should know at once, as the lady is soon going away, & it takes time to make up. prepare."

"Don't press me – it worries me. I was in hopes you had thought no more of it. I cannot part with it: so there!"

"Now look here Marty", said the barber, sitting down on the coffin-stool table. "How much do you get for making these spars?

"Hush – father's upstairs awake; he don't know that I am doing his work.

"Well, now tell me", said the man more softly. "How much do you get?"

"Eighteen pence a thousand," she said reluctantly.

"Who are you making them for?" "Mr Mellbury the timber-dealer, just below here."

"And how many can you make in a day?"

"In a day, & half the night, three bundles – that's a thousand & half."

"Two-&-three-pence". The barber paused. "Well, look here" he continued with the remains of a calculation in his tone, which calculation had been to that concerning the reduction to figures of the probable monetary magnetism necessary to overcome power the resistent force of her present purse & the woman's love of coneluion. "Here's

a sovereign – a gold sovereign almost new. He held it out between his finger & thumb. "That's as much as you'd earn in a week of half at that rough man's-work; & it's yours for just letting me snip off what you've got too much of."

The girl's bosom moved a little very. "Why can't the lady send to some other girl who don't value her hair – not to me!" she exclaimed.

"Why, simpleton, because yours is the exact shade of her own, & 'tis a shade you can't match by dyeing. But you are not going to refuse me now I've come all the way from Sherton on purpose!"

"I say I won't sell it – to you or anybody."

"Now listen;" and he drew up a little closer beside her. "The lady is very rich, & won't be particular to a few shillings; so I will advance to this, on my own responsibility: I'll make the one sovereign two, rather than go back empty-handed."

"No, no, no!" she cried beginning to be much agitated. "You are a tempting me, Mr Percombe. You go on like the Devil to Doctor Faustus in the penny book. But I don't want your money, & won't agree. Why did you come? I said when you got me into your shop & urged me so much that I did it mean to sell my hair!"

He spoke was hot & stern.

"Marty, now hearken. The lady that wants it wants it badly. And between you & me you'd better let her have it. 'Twill be bad for you if you don't."

"Bad for me? Who is she then?"

The barber held his tongue, & the girl repeated the question.

"I am not at liberty to tell you. And as she's going abroad soon it makes no difference who she is at all."

"She wants it to go abroad wi'?"

Percombe assented by a nod. The girl regarded him reflectively. "Barber Percombe," she said, "I know who 'tis – 'Tis She at the House – Mrs Charmond!"

"That's my secret. However, if you will agree to let me have it, & I'll tell you in confidence."

"I'll certainly not let you have it unless you tell me the truth. It is Mrs Charmond?"

The barber dropped his voice. "Well – it is. You sat in front of her in church the other day; & ~~as they can't hit off her shade to her taste even in London~~ (she noticed how exactly your hair matched her own.) Ever since then she's been hankering for it, & at last decided to get it. As she won't wear it till she goes off abroad she knows nobody will recognise the change. I'm commissioned to get it for her, & then it is to be ~~sent to~~ made up. I should'nt have vamped all these miles for any less important employer. Now, mind – 'tis as much as my business with her is worth if it should ~~to let~~ be known that I've let out her name; but honour between us two, Marty; & you'll say nothing that would injure me?"

"I don't wish to tell upon her," said Marty coolly. "But my hair is my own, & I'm going to keep it."

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"Now that's not fair, after what I've told you," said the retired barber. "You see, Matty, as you are in the same parish, & in one of her cottages, & your father is ill, & wouldn't like to turn out, it would be as well to oblige her. I say that as a friend.— But I won't press you to make up your mind to-night. You'll be coming to market to-morrow I dare say; & you can call then. If you think it over, you'll be inclined to bring what I want, I know."

"I've nothing more to say," she answered faintly.

Her companion saw from her manner that it was useless to urge her further by speech. "As you are a trusty young woman," he said, I'll put these sovereigns up here, for ornament, that you may see how handsome they are. Bring the hair to-morrow; or return the sovereigns." He stuck them edgewise into the frame of a small mantel looking-glass. "I hope you'll bring it; for your sake & mine. I should have thought she could have suited herself elsewhere; but as it's her fancy it must be indulged if possible. If you do cut it off yourself, mind how you do it so as to keep all the locks one way." He showed her how this was to be done.

"But I shan't," she replied with laconic indifference. "I value my looks too much to spoil 'em. She wants my hair to get another lover with; though if stories are true she's broke the heart of many a noble gentleman already."

"Lord - it's wonderful how you guess things, Marty," said the barber. "I've had it from them that know that there certainly is some foreign gentleman in her eye. However, mind what I ask."

"She's not going to get him through me."

Percombe had retired as far as the door; he came back, planted his cane on the coffin-stool, & looked her in the face. "Marty South" he said, with deliberate emphasis, "you've got a lover yourself; & that's why you won't let it go!"

She reddened so intensely as to pass the mild blush that suffices to heighten beauty; she put the yellow leather glove on one hand, took up the work with the other, & sat down doggedly to her work without turning her face to him again. He regarded her head for a moment, went to the door, & departed on his way homeward with one look back at her.

Marty pursued her occupation for a few minutes, then suddenly laying down the bill-hook, she jumped up, & went to the staircase, at the back of the room, where she opened a door which disclosed a staircase so whitely scrubbed that the grain of the wood was well-nigh sodden away by such cleansing. At the top she gently approached & opened a bedroom, & without entering said "Father, do you want anything?"

A weak voice inside answered in the negative; adding "I should be all right by to-morrow if it were not for the tree!"

"The tree again - always the tree! O father, don't worry so about that. You know it can do you no harm."

"Who have ye had talking to ye downstairs?"

soothingly.
"A Sherton man called — nothing to trouble about," she said ^
"Father," she went on, "can Mrs Charmond turn us out of our house if she's minded to?"

"Turn us out? No. Nobody can turn us out till my poor soul is turned out of my body. 'Tis life-hold — like Ambrose Winterborne's. But when my life drops 'tould be hers — not till then." His words on this subject so far had been rational & firm enough. But now he lapsed into his moaning strain: "And the tree will do it — that tree will soon be the death of me."

"Nonsense — you know better. How can it be?" She refrained from further speech, & descended to the ground floor again.

"Thank Heaven then," she said fervently. "What belongs to me I keep."

Chapter III.

[The lights in the village went out, house after house, till there only remained two in the darkness. One of these came from ~~the kiln~~ ~~The lights in the village went out one by one, all but that about~~ a residence on the hill-side, of which there is nothing to say at present; the other shone from the window of Marty South's. Precisely the same outward effect was produced there, however, by her rising when the clock struck ten, & hanging up a thick cloth curtain. The door it was necessary to keep ~~until so as to screen the window.~~ ajar in her as in most cottages, because of the smoke; but she obviated the effect of the ribband of light through the chink by hanging a cloth over that also. She was one of those people who, if they have to work harder than their neighbours, prefer to keep the recently a secret as far as

possible; but for the slight sounds of wood-splintering which came from within no wayfarer would have perceived that here the cottager did not sleep as elsewhere.

Eleven, twelve, one o'clock struck; the heap of spars grew higher, & the pile of chips & ends more bulky. Even the light on the hill had now been extinguished, but, when still she worked on. The temperature of the night without had fallen so low as to make her chilly she opened a large blue umbrella to ward off the draught from the door. The two sovereigns confronted her from the looking-glass in such a manner as to suggest a pair of jaundiced eyes on the watch for an opportunity. Whenever she sighed for weariness she lifted her gaze towards them, but withdrew it quickly, stroking her tresses with her fingers for a moment, as if to assure herself that they were still secure. When the clock struck three she arose, & tied up the spars she had last made into a bundle resembling those that lay against the wall.

She wrapped round her a long red woollen cravat, & opened the door. The night in all its fulness met her flatly on the threshold, like the very brink of an absolute void, or the ante-mundane Ginnung-Gap believed in by her Teutonic forefathers; for here there was no street lamp or lantern to form a kindly intermediate transition between the inner glare & the hoarser dark. A lingering wind brought to her ear the creaking sound of two crowded hop-vines in the neighbouring quickset, & the cackle of fowls which were rubbing each other into wounds, & other vocalized sorrows

of the trees, together with the screech of owls, & the fluttering tumble of some awkward wood-pigeon ill-balanced on its roosting-bough.

But the pupils of her young eyes soon expanded, & she could see well enough for her purpose. Taking a bundle of spars under each arm, & guided by the serrated line of tree-tops against the sky, she went some hundred yards or more down the lane till she reached a long open shed, carpeted around with the dead leaves that lay about everywhere. Night, that strange personality, which within walls brings ominous impressions of introspectiveness & self-distrust, but under the open sky takes away banishes such subjective anxieties as too trivial for thought, in a reminiscent gave inspired Marty South with a less perturbed & briskier manner now. She laid the spars on the ground within the shed, & returned for more; going to & fro till her whole manufactured stock was deposited here.

This erection was the waggon-shed house of the chief man of business hereabout, Mr George Melbury, the timber & bark & copse-ware merchant for whom the Marty's father did work of this sort by the piece. The form It formed one of the many rambling outhouses which surrounded his dwelling, an equally irregular block of building, whose immense chimneys could just be discerned even now. The form huge waggons under the shed were built on those ancient lines whose proportions have been ousted by modern patterns, their shapes bulging & curving base & at the ends like Trafalgar line-of-battle ships,

Beside her, in case she might require more

with which venerable trucks, indeed, these vehicles evidenced a constructive spirit curiously in harmony. One was laden with sheep-cribs, another with hurdles, another with ash poles, & the fourth, at the foot of which she had placed her thatching-spars, was half full of similar bundles.

She was pausing a moment with that easeful sense of accomplishment which follows work done that has been a hard struggle in the doing, when she heard a woman's voice on the other side of the hedge say anxiously, "George?" In a moment the name was repeated, with "Do come indoors! What are you doing there?"

The cart-house adjoined the garden, & before Marty had moved she saw enter the latter from the timber-merchant's back-door an elderly woman sheltering a candle with her hand, the light from which cast a moving thorn-pattern of shade on Marty's face. Its rays soon fell upon a man (whose clothes were roughly thrown on, standing) in advance of the speaker, & He was a thin slightly stooping figure, with a small nervous mouth & a face cleanly shaven; & he walked along the path with his eyes bent on the ground. In the pair Marty soon recognized her employer Melbury & his wife. She was the second Mrs Melbury, the first having died shortly after the birth of the timber-merchant's only child.

"'Tis no use to stay in bed," he said as soon as she came up to where he was restlessly pacing about. "I can't sleep — I keep thinking of things, & worrying about the girl, till I'm quite in a fever

of anxiety." He went on to say that he could not think why "she" — (Marty knew he was speaking of his daughter) — did not answer his letter. "She must be ill — she must, certainly," he said.

"No, no. 'Tis all right, George," said his wife; and she assured him that such things always did appear somewhat gloomy in the night-time, if people allowed their minds to run on them; that when the morning came it was seen that such fears were but shadows. "Grace is as well as you or I" she declared.

But to no purpose. But he persisted that she did not see all — that she did not see so much as he. His daughter's not writing was only one part of his worry. On account of her he was always obliged to have anxious concerning conversations about money affairs, which he would never allow his mind to alarm about otherwise. The reason he gave was that, as she had nobody to depend upon for a provision but himself, he wished her, when he was gone, to be secured out of risk of poverty.

To this Mrs Melbury replied that Grace would be sure to marry well, & that hence a hundred pounds more or less from him would not make much difference.

Her husband said that that was what she, Mrs Melbury, naturally thought; but there she was wrong, & in that lay the source of his trouble. "I have a plan in my head about her", he said; "and according to my plan she will marry a rich man".

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a plan for her not to marry well?" said his wife, surprised.

"Well, in one sense it is that," replied Melbury. "It is a plan for her to marry a particular person, & as he has not so much money as she might expect it might be called as you call it. I may not be able to carry it out; & even if I do it may not be a good thing for her. I want her to marry Giles Winterborne."

His companion repeated the name. "Well - it is all right," she said presently. "He adores the very ground she walks on; only he's close, & won't show it much."

Marty South appeared startled; & could not tear herself away.

Yes, the timber-merchant asserted, he knew that well enough. Mr Winterborne had been interested in his daughter for years; that was what had led him into the notion of their union. And he knew that she used to have no objection to him. But it was not that any difficulty about that which embarrassed him. It was that, since he had educated her so well, & so long, & so far above the level of daughters hereabout, it was "wasting her" to give her to a man of so higher standing than the young man in question.

"That's what I have been thinking," said Mrs Melbury. "And I've thought [illegible]" "Well then, Lucy; now you've hit it," answered the timber-merchant with feeling. "There lies my trouble. I vowed to let her marry him, & to make her as valuable as I could to him by schooling her as many years

~~* I wish for nothing definite. But there's lots of possible things.~~
~~today, Mrs Charmond is wanting some young lady I hear, to go~~
~~abroad with her – as companion, or some such relation – that'd~~
~~jump at Grace.~~
~~"That's all uncertain. Better stick to what's sure."~~

& as thoroughly as possible. I mean to keep my vow. I made it because I did his father a terrible wrong; & it was a weight on my conscience ever since that time till this scheme of making amends occured to me through seeing that Giles Winterborne liked her."

"Wronged his father?" asked Mrs Melbury.

"Yes — deep grievously wronged him," said her husband.

"Well don't think of it to night," she urged. "Come in doors."

"No, no, the air cools my head — I shall not stay long." He was silent awhile: then he told her, as nearly as many could gather, that his first wife, his daughter Grace's mother, was first the sweetheart of Winterborne's father, who loved her tenderly; till he, the speaker, won her away from him by a trick, because he wanted to marry her himself. He went on sadly to say that the other man's happiness was ruined by it; that though he married Winterborne's mother, it was but a half-hearted business with him. Melbury added that he was afterwards very miserable at what he had done; but that as time went on, & the children grew up, & seemed to be attached to each other, he determined to do all he could to right the wrong by letting his daughter marry the lad; not only that, but to give her the best education he could afford, so as to make the gift as valuable a one as it lay in his power to bestow. "I still mean to do it," said Melbury. "Then do," said she. "But all these things trouble me," said he; "for I feel I am sacrificing her for my own sin; & I often think of her, & often come down here, & look at this."

⁂ "I wish for nothing definite. But there's a lot of things possible for her. Why, Mrs Charmond is wanting some refined young lady, I hear, to go abroad with her – as companion or something of the kind. She'd jump at Grace."

"That's all uncertain. Better stick to what's sure."

~~His wife asked what~~. "Look at what?" asked his wife.

He took the candle from her hand, held it to the ground, & removed a tile which lay in the garden-path. "'Tis the track of her shoe that she made when she ran down here, the day before she went away all those months ago. I covered it up when she was gone; & when I come here & look at it I ask myself again, why should she be sacrificed to a poor man?"

"It is not altogether a sacrifice ~~to a poor man~~ said the woman "He is in love with her, & he's honest & upright. If she encourages him what can you wish for more?" X

"True, true," said Melbury; "& I hope it will be for the best. ~~I will hope to~~ Yes - let me get 'em married up as soon as I can, so as to have it over & done with....." He continued working ~~still~~ at the imprint, while he said "Suppose she should be dying?" ~~he said,~~ "and never make a track on this path any more?"

"She'll write soon – depend upon't. Come, 'tis wrong to ~~come~~ stay here & brood so."

He admitted it; but said he could not help it. "Whether she write or no I shall fetch her in a few days." ~~To-night~~ And thus speaking he covered the track, & preceded his wife indoors.

Melbury perhaps was an unlucky man in having within him the sentiment which could indulge in this foolish fondness

about the imprint of a daughter's footstep. Nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings, & when advancing years render the opened hearts of those who possess them less dexterous than formerly in shutting against the blast, they must suffer "buffeting at will by rain & storm" no less than Little Celandines.

But her own existence, & not Mr Melbury's, was the centre of Marty's consciousness, & it was in relation to this that the matter struck her as she slowly withdrew.

"That, then, is the secret of it all," she said. "And Giles Winterborne is not for me; & the less I think of him the better."

She returned to her cottage. The sovereigns were staring at her from the looking-glass as she had left them. With a preoccupied countenance, & with tears in her eyes, she got a pair of scissors, & began mercilessly cutting off the long locks of her hair, unskilfully arranging & tying them with their points all one way as the barber had directed. She pinned the work as mercilessly upon the dark pale scrubbed deal of the coffin-stool-table they stretched like waving & ropy weeds over a rocky bed of a clear stream.

She would not turn again to the little looking-glass, out of humanity to herself, knowing what a deflowered visage would look back at her & almost break her heart; she dreaded it as much as did her own ancestral goddess Sif the reflection of this image in the pool after the rape of her locks by Loke the malicious. She steadily stuck to business, wrapped the hair in a parcel, & sealed it up; after which she raked out

the fire & went to bed, having first set up an alarum made of a candle & piece of thread, with a stone attached. [But such a reminder was unnecessary to-night. Having tossed till about five o'clock Marty heard the sparrows ~~in the eaves~~ walking down their long holes in the thatch above above her sloping ceiling to their orifice at the eaves; whereupon she also arose, & descended to the ground floor again.

It was still dark; but she began moving about the house in those automatic initiatory acts & touches which represent among housewives the installation of another day. While thus employed she heard the rumbling of Mr Melbury's waggons & knew that there, too, the day's toil had begun.

An armful of gads thrown on the still hot embers caused them to blaze up cheerfully, & bring her diminished head-gear into sudden prominence as a shadow. At this a step approached the door.

"Are folk astir here yet?" enquired a voice she knew well.

"Yes, Mr Winterborne." said Marty, throwing on a tilt bonnet, which completely hid the recent ravages of the scissors. "Come in."

The door was flung back, & there stepped in upon the mat a man, not particularly young for a ~~young~~ lover, nor particularly mature for a person of ~~business~~ affairs. There was reserve in his glance, & restraint upon his mouth. He carried a horn lantern which hung upon a swivel, & wheeling as it dangled marked grotesque ~~shades~~ shapes upon the shadier part of the walls.

"He said that he had looked in on his way down, & ~~beg~~ tell her that they did not expect her ~~you~~ father to make up his contract if he was not well. Mr Melbury would give him another week, & they would go their journey ~~ed~~ with a short load that day."

"They are done," said Marty. "And lying in the cart-house."

"Done?" he repeated. "Your father has not been too ill to work after all, then?

She made some evasive reply. "I'll show you where they be, if you are going down," she added

They went out & walked together, the pattern of the air-holes in the top of the lantern being thrown upon the mist overhead, where they appeared of giant size, as if reaching the sky. They had no remarks to make to each other, & they uttered none. Hardly anything could be more isolated, or more self-contained, than the lives of these two walking here in the lonely heart of an Arbelucan home, when grey shades, material & mental, are so very grey; & yet, looked at in a certain way, these lonely couples formed no detached design at all, but were part of the pattern in the great web of human doings then weaving in both hemispheres, from the White Sea to Cape Horn.

The shed was reached, & she pointed out the spars. Winterborne regarded them silently, then looked at her.

"Now Marty — I believe ....?" he said, & shook his head.

"What?"

"That you've done the work yourself."

"Don't you tell anybody, will you, Mr Winterborne," she pleaded by way of answer. "Because I am afraid Mr Melbury may refuse my work if he knows it is mine."

"But how could you learn to do it? 'Tis a trade."

"Trade!" said she. "I'd be bound to learn it in two hours."

"Oh no you wouldn't, Mrs Marty." Winterborne held down his lantern, & examined the cleanly split hazels as they lay. "Marty," he said with dry admiration, "your father with his forty years of practice never made a spar better than that. They are too good for the thatching of horses, they are good enough for the furniture. But I won't tell. Let me look at your hands – your poor hands!"

He had a kindly manner of a quietly severe tone; & when she seemed reluctant to show her hands he took hold of one & examined it as if it were his own. Her fingers were blistered.

"They'll get harder in time," she said. "For if father continues ill I shall have to go on wi' it. Now I'll help put 'em up in waggan."

Winterborne without speaking set down his lantern, lifted her as she was about to stoop over the bundles, placed her behind him, & began throwing up the bundles himself. "Rather than you should do it I will," he said. "But the men will be here directly ..... Why, Marty – whatever has happened to your head. Lord, it has shrunk to nothing – it looks like an apple upon a gate-post."

Her heart swelled, & she could not speak. At length she managed to groan, looking in the ground, "I've made myself ugly – & hateful – that's what I've done!"

"No, no", he answered. "You've only cut your hair — I see now."

"Then why must you needs say that about apples & gate-posts!"

"Let me see?"

"No, no!" She ran off into the sluggish gloom of the dawn. He did not attempt to follow her. When she reached her father's door she stood on the step & looked back & watched. Mr Melbury's men had armed, & were loading up the spars & then lanterns appearing from the distance at which she stood to have won circles round them, like eyes weary with watching. She observed them for a few seconds as they set about harnessing the horses, & went indoors.

Chapter IV.

There was now a distinct manifestation of morning in the air, & presently the bleared white visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child. The villagers everywhere had already bestirred themselves, & were astir at this time of the year at the far less dreary hour of absolute darkness. It had been above an hour earlier, before a single bird had untucked his head, that twenty lights were struck in as many bedrooms, twenty pairs of shutters had been opened, & twenty pairs of eyes had been stretched to the sky to forecast the weather for the day.

Owls that had been catching mice in the outhouses, rabbits that had been eating the winter-greens in the gardens, & stoats that had been sucking the blood of the rabbits, discerning that their human neighbours

were on the move, discreetly withdrew from publicity, & were seen & heard no more that day.

The daylight revealed the whole of Mr Melbury's homestead, of which the waggon sheds had been an outlying erection. It formed three sides of an open quadrangle, & consisted of all sorts of buildings, the largest & central one being the dwelling itself. The fourth side of the quadrangle was the public road, ~~divided off by a hedge~~ shut off by a wall.

It was a dwelling-house of respectable, roomy, almost dignified aspect; which, taken with the fact that there were the remains of ~~of~~ other such buildings near about, indicated that Little Hintock had at some time or other been of greater importance than now, as its old name of Hintock-St.-Osmund also testified. The house was of no marked antiquity; yet of well-advanced age; older than a stale fading novelty, but no ~~contemporary and exemplar~~ canonized antique; faded, not hoary; looking at you from the still distinct middle-distance of the early Georgian ~~epoch~~ time, & awakening on that account the instincts of reminiscence more ~~than~~ decidedly than the far & far grander memorials & antiquities which have to reach ~~for example~~ from the misty ~~remoteness~~ stretches reaches of mediæval times. The faces, dress, passions, gratitudes, & revenges of the great-grandfathers & grandmothers who had been the first to gaze from those ~~square-headed~~ rectangular windows, & had stood under that keystoned doorway, could be divined & measured by homely standards of to-day. It was a house in whose reverberations old ~~reverberating~~ personal tales were yet audible if

properly listened for; & not, as with those of the castle & cloister, silent beyond the possibility of echo.

The garden-front remained much as it had always been. The principal ~~entrance~~ house-door opened on the square, and or quadrangle towards the road, formerly a regular carriage entrance; ~~through~~ the middle of the area was now made use of for stacking timber, faggots, trundles, & other ~~articles~~ products of the wood. It was divided from the lane by a lichen-coated wall, in which ~~stood~~ hung a pair of gates, flanked by piers out of the perpendicular, with a round white ball on the top of each. (& there was a porch & entrance that way. But)

The building on the left of the enclosure was a long-backed erection now used for spar-making, sawing, crib-framing, & copse-ware manufacture in general. Opposite were the waggon-sheds where Marty had deposited her spars.

Here Winterborne had remained after the girls abrupt departure, to see that the waggon-loads were properly made up. Winterborne ~~He~~ was connected with the Melbury family in various ways. In addition to the sentimental relationship which arose from his father having been the first Mrs Melbury's lover Winterborne's Aunt had married & emigrated with the brother of the timber-merchant many years before - ~~a connection~~ an alliance that was sufficient to place Winterborne, though the poorer, on a footing of ~~familiarity~~ social intimacy with the Melburys. As in most villages so secluded as this

intermarriages were ~~so~~ of Hapsburgian pregnancy among the inhabitants, & there was hardly two houses in Little-Hintock unrelated by some matrimonial tie or other.

For this reason a curious kind of partnership existed between Melbury & the yeoman man — a partnership based upon an unwritten code, by which each acted in the way he thought ~~was~~ fair towards the other, on a give-&-take principle. Melbury, with his timber & copse-ware business, found that the weight of his labour came in winter & spring. Winterborne was in the apple & cider trade, & his requirements in cartage & other work came in the autumn of each year. Hence horses, waggons, & in some degree men, were handed over to him when the apples began to fall; he in return, lending his assistance to Melbury in the busiest wood-cutting season, as now.

Before he had left the shed a boy came from the house to ask him to remain till Mr Melbury had seen him. Winterborne thereupon ~~he~~ crossed over to the spar-house where two or three men ~~were at~~ were already at work, two of them being travelling spar-makers from White-Hart Lane, who, when this kind of work began, made their appearance regularly, & when it was over disappeared in silence till the season came again.

Fire-wood was the one thing abundant in Little Hintock; & a blaze of sad-ends made the outhouse ~~cheerful~~ gay with its light,

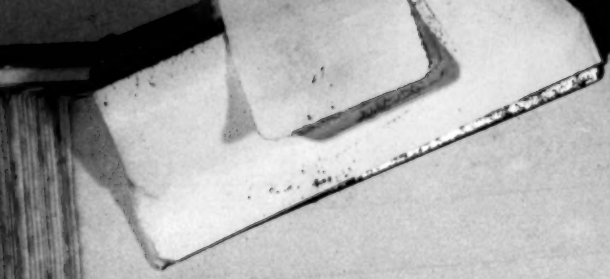
·X· None of the ~~Rambler~~ Creedle called for any remark, except perhaps ~~Rambler~~.
To have completely described him it would have been necessary to
write a military memoir, for he wore under his smockfrock a cast-off soldier's jacket under that had
seen hot service ~~his smock frock~~, its collar showing just above the flapp of the pocket;
memoir, to include the top-boots that he had picked up by chance;
also chronicles of voyaging & ship-wreck, for his pocket-knife had
been given him by a weather-beaten sailor. But Creedle (carried about with him these silent
testimonies of war, sport, & adventure, on his uneventful rounds)
~~Rambler had become impregnated~~
& thought nothing of their associations or their story.

which
[illegible] vied with that of the day as yet. In the hollow shades of the roof could be seen dangling etiolated arms of ivy which had crept through the joints of the tiles & were groping in vain for some support, their leaves being diversified & sickly for want of sunlight; others were pushing in with such force at the eaves as to lift from their supports the shelves that were fixed there.

Besides the itinerant journey-workers there were also present John Upjohn, engaged in the hollow-turnery trade, who lived hard by; Old Timothy Tangs & young Timothy Tangs, top & bottom sawyers at work in Mr Melbury's pit outside, Aaron Bawtree, who kept the cider-house, & Robert Creedle, the thatcher, who also an old man who stood warming his hands; these latter having been worked for Winterborne, & enticed in by the ruddy blaze. (though they had no particular business there)

Copse-work, as it was called, being an occupation which the secondary intelligence of the hands & arms could carry on without requiring the sovereign attention of the head, the minds of its professors wandered considerably from the objects before them; hence the tales, stories, chronicles, & ramifications of family history which were recounted here here (of a very exhausting kind, & sometimes) so interminable as to defy description

Winterborne, seeing that Melbury had not arrived, stepped to the back against the outside door; & the conversation interrupted by his momentary presence at the door flowed again anew, reaching his ears as an accompaniment to the regular dripping of the fog from the plantation & boughs around



Hardy

The topic at present handled was (a highly popular & frequent one —) the personal character of Mrs Charmond, the mistress of the surrounding woods & groves.

My brother-law told me, & I've no reason to doubt it," said Creedle, "that she'd sit down to her dinner with a frock hardly higher than her elbows. "O you wicked woman!" he said to himself when he first see her, "you go to your church, & sit, & kneel, as if your knee-joints were greased with very saint's anointment, & tell off your hear-us-good-Lords like a business man counting money; & yet you can eat your victuals such a figure as that!" Whether she's a reformed character by this time I can't say; but I don't care who the man is, that's how she went on when my brother-law lived here."

"Did she do it in her husband's time?"

"That I don't know — hardly, I should think, considering his temper. Ah!...."

Here Creedle threw grieved remembrance into physical form by slowly withdrawing his head to obliquity & letting resignedly his eyes water. "That man!" "not if the angels of heaven come down," he said, "shall you do another day's work for me!" Yes — He'd say anything — anything; and upset as soon take a winged creature's name in vain as yours or mine. I shall never forget it, for I had a hard family just then, all upon my one shoulders! Well, now I must get these spars home-along, & to-morrow, thank God, I must see about using 'em."

An old woman now entered upon the scene. She was Mr Melbury's servant, & passed a great part of her time in crossing the yard between the house-door & the spar-shed, whither she had come now for fuel. She had two facial aspects: one, of a soft & flexible kind, she used indoors when assisting about the parlour or upstairs; the other, with stiff lines & corners, when she was bustling among the men in the spar-house or out-doors.

"Ah, Grammer Oliver," said John Upjohn, "it do do my heart good to see a old woman like you so dapper and stirring, when I bear in mind that, after fifty, one year counts as two did afore! But your smoke didn't rise till this morning till twenty minutes past seven by my beater; and that's late, Grammer Oliver."

"If you was a full-sized man, John, people might take notice of your scornful meanings. But your growing up was such a scrimped and scanty business that really a woman couldn't help feeling hurt if you were to spit fire and brimstone itself at her.... Here," she added, holding out a spar-gad to one of the workmen, from which dangled a long black-pudding; "here's something for thy breckfast; and if you want tea you must fetch it from indoors."

"Mr Melbury is late this morning!" said the bottom-sawyer.

"Yes. 'Twas a dark dawn," said Mrs Oliver. "Even when I opened the door, so late as I was, you couldn't have told poor men from gentlemen, and I don't think master slept at all well to-night. He's anxious about his daughter; and I know what that is, for I've cried bucketfuls for my own."

When the old woman had gone Creedle said "He'll fret his gizzard green if he don't soon hear from that maid of his. Well, another learning is better than houses and lands. But to keep a maid at school till she's taller out of pattens than her mother was in 'em — 'tis tempting Providence."

"It seems no time ago that she was a little playward girl," said young Timothy Tangs.

"I can mind her mother", said the hollow-turner old Timothy. "Always a teeny delicate piece; upon your hand her touch was as soft & cool as wind. She was inoculated for the small-pox & had it beautifully fine, just about the time that I was out of my apprenticeship. And a long apprenticeship 'twas. I served that master of mine six years, & three hundred & fourteen days." The hollow-turner pronounced the days with emphasis, as if, considering their number, they were a rather more remarkable fact than the years.

"Mr Winterborne's father walked with her at one time", said old Timothy Tangs. "But Mr Melbury won her. She was a child of a woman, & would cry like rain if so be he huffed her. Whenever she & her husband came to a puddle in their walks together he'd take her up like a halfpenny doll, & put her over without dirting her a speck. And if Mr Melbury he keeps the daughter so long at boarding-school he'll make her as nesh as her mother was. But here he comes."

Just before this moment Winterborne had seen Melbury crossing the court from his door. He was carrying an open letter in his hand, & had come straight to Winterborne, his gloom of the preceding night had entirely gone.

"I'd no sooner made up my mind, Giles Ambrose, to go & see why Grace did'nt come or write than I get a letter from her. — 'Clyston: Wednesday: My dear Father', says she. 'I'm coming home to-morrow (that's to-day), but I did'nt think it worth while to write long beforehand'. The little rascal, &

Thomas Smith Esqr.

didn't she! Now, Giles Winterborne, ~~I've a mind~~ as you are going to Sherton market-day with your appletrees, why not join me at Greenhill here, and we'll drive home all together."

He made the proposal with cheerful energy; he was hardly the same man as the man of the small dark hours. Ever it happens that the tendency to be cheered is stronger than the tendency to be cast down; even among the moodiest of souls this specific gravity stands permanently less than that of the sea of troubles into which it is thrown.

Winterborne, though not demonstrative, replied to this suggestion with something like alacrity. There was not much doubt that Marty's grounds for cutting off her hair were substantial enough, if Ambrose's eyes had been a reason for keeping it on. As for the timber-merchant, it was plain that his invitation had been given solely in pursuance of his scheme for uniting the pair. He had made up his mind to the course as a duty; and was strenuously bent upon following it out.

Accompanied and followed by Winterborne he now turned towards the door of the spar-house, when his footsteps were heard by the men as aforesaid. "Well John, and Lot," he said, nodding, as he entered. "A rimy morning."

"'Tis, sir!" said Creedle energetically, for not having as yet been able to summon force sufficient to begin work, he felt the necessity of showing some zeal in his speech. "I don't care who the man is, 'tis the rimiest morning we've had this fall season."

14.
13.0
14.0

"I heard you wondering why I've kept my daughter so long at boarding-school", resumed Mr Melbury, looking up from the letter which he was reading anew by the fire, & turning to them with the suddenness that was a trait in him. "Hey?" he asked with affected shrewdness. "But you did, you know. Well now, though it is my own business more than anybody else's, I'll tell ye. When I was a boy along with a lot of others another boy - the parson's son - asked me 'Who dragged who round the walls of what?' and I said, 'Sam Barrett, who dragged his wife in a chair round the tower when she went to be churched.' They laughed at me with such torrents of scorn that I went home ashamed, & couldn't sleep for shame; & I cried that night till my pillow was wet: I thought to myself there & then: 'They may laugh at me for my ignorance; but that was till at last father's fault, & none of my making, & I must bear it. But they shall never laugh at my children, if I have any: I'll starve first!' Thank God I've been able to keep her at school without sacrifice; & her scholarship is such that she's stayed on as governess for a time. Let 'em laugh now if they can: Mrs Charmond herself is not better informed than my girl Grace". 16

There was something between high indifference & humble emotion in his delivery, which made it difficult for them to reply. Winterborne's interest was of a kind which did not show itself in words: he stood listening, by the fire, mechanically stirring the embers with a spar-rod.

"You'll be ready, then, Ambrose?" Melbury continued anew from a reverie. "Well, what was the latest news at Sholsford yesterday, Mr Bawtree?"

"Well, Shottsford is Shottsford still – you can't victual your carcase, unless you've got there, money; & you can't buy a cup of genuine here, whether or no .... But as the saying is, Go abroad & you'll hear news of home. It seems that our new neighbour, this young Doctor What's-his-name, is a strange, deep, perusing gentleman; and there's good reason for supposing, he has sold his soul to the wicked-one."

"'Od name it all," murmured the Timber-merchant, unimpressed by the news, but reminded of other things by the subject of it: "I've got to meet a gentleman this very morning; & yet I've planned to go to Sherton abbas for the maid."

"I won't praise the Doctor's wisdom till I hear what sort of bargain he's made," said the Top-sawyer.

"'Tis only an old woman's tale," said Bawtree. "But it seems that he wanted certain books on some mysterious or black art, science, & in order that the people hereabout should not know anything about his dark readings he ordered 'em direct from London, & not from the Sherton bookseller. The parcel was delivered by mistake at the parsons, & he went at home; so his wife opened it; & went into hysterics when she read 'em, thinking her husband had turned heathen. But when he came he said he knew no more about 'em than she; & found they were Mr Fitzpiers's property. So he sent 'em on by the sexton, who wrote 'Beware! outside, & left."

"He must be a curious young man" mused the hollow turner. "He must," said Timothy Tangs.

"Nonsense", said Mr Melbury authoritatively. "He's only a gentleman fond of science, & philosophy, & poetry, & in fact, every kind of knowledge and being lonely here he passes his time in making such matters his hobby."

"Well", said old Timothy, "'tis a strange thing about doctors that the worse they be the better they be. I mean that if you hear anything of this sort about 'em, ten to one they can cure ye as nobody else can."

"True", said Bat Bawtree emphatically. "And for my part I shall take my custom from old Jones & go to this one directly I've anything the matter with me. That last medicine old Jones gave me had no taste in it at-all."

Mr Melbury, as became a well informed man, did not, his recitals, being moreover preoccupied with the business appointment which had come into his head. He walked up & down, looking on the floor – his usual custom when undecided. That stiffness about the hip, & knee-joint which was apparent when he walked was the net product of the divers sprains & over-exertions that had been required of him in handling trees & timber when a young man, for he was of the sort called self-made, & had worked hard. He knew the origin of every one of these cramps: that in his left shoulder had come of carrying a pollard, unassisted, from Tutcombe Bottom home; that in one leg was caused by the crash of an elm against it when they were felling; that in the other was from lifting a bole. On many a morrow after wearying himself by these prodigal muscular efforts, he had risen from his bed fresh as usual; his lassitude had departed, apparently for ever; & confident in the recuperative power of his youth he had repeated the strains anew. But treacherous Time had been only hiding ill results when they could be guarded against & when they could not: keeping them back for greater accumulation on his declining years the store had been unfolded in the form of rheumatisms, tricks & spasms, & cramps, in any one of which Melbury recognized some act, which, had its consequence been contemporaneously & distinctly made known, he would wisely have abstained from repeating.

On a summons by Grammer Oliver to breakfast he left the shed. Reaching the kitchen, where the family breakfasted in winter to save house-labour, he sat down by the fire & looked a long time at the pair of dancing shadows cast by each fire-iron & dog-knob on

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the whitewashed chimney-corner — a yellow one from the window, & a blue one from the fire. Melbury

"I don't quite know what to do to-day," he said to his wife at last. "I've recollected that I promised to meet Mrs Charmond's steward in Round Wood at twelve o'clock; & yet I want to go for Grace."

"Why not let Giles fetch her by himself. 'Twill bring 'em together all the quicker?"

"I could do that — but I should like to go myself. I always have gone without fail, every time hitherto. It has been a great pleasure to drive in to Sherton, & wait, & see her arrive: & perhaps she'll be disappointed if I stay away."

"You may be disappointed, but I don't think she will, if you send Ambrose," said Mrs Melbury drily.

"Very well — I'll send him".

Melbury was often persuaded by the quietude of his wife's words than when strenuous argument would have had no effect. This second Mrs Melbury was a placid woman who had been nurse to his child Grace before her mother's death. After that melancholy event little Grace had clung to the nurse with much affection; & ultimately Melbury, in dread lest the only woman who cared for the girl should be induced to leave her, persuaded the mild Lucy to marry him. The arrangement — for it was little more — had worked satisfactorily enough; & Grace had thriven, & Melbury had not repented.

"~~Landing advising~~

He returned to the Spar-house & found Giles near at hand, to whom he explained the change of plan. "As she won't arrive till five o'clock, you can get your business very well over in time to receive her", said Melbury. "The green gig will do for her - you'll spin along quicker with that, & won't be late upon the road. Her boxes can be fetched called for by one of the waggons"

Winterborne, knowing nothing of the timber-merchant's ulterior aims, quietly thought all this to be a kindly chance. Wishing even more than her father to despatch his apple-tree business in the market before Grace's arrival, he prepared to start at once.

Melbury was careful that the turn-out should be seemly. The gig-wheels, for instance, were not always washed during winter-time before a journey, the muddy roads rendering that labour useless; but they were washed to-day. The harness was blacked, & when the rather elderly white horse had been put in & Winterborne was in his seat, ready to start, Mr Melbury stepped out with a blacking-brush & with his own hands touched over the yellow hoofs of the animal,

"You see, Giles", he said as he blacked, "coming from a fashionable school she might feel shocked at the homeliness of home; & 'tis these little things that catch a dainty women's eye if they are neglected. We living here alone don't notice how the whitey-brown creeps out of the earth over us; but she fresh from a city — why, she'll notice everything."

"That she will", said Giles

"And scorn us if we don't mind."

"Not scorn us"

No, no, no — that's only words. She's too good a girl to do that. But when we consider what she knows, & what she has seen since she last saw us, 'tis as well to meet her views as nearly as possible. Why 'tis a year since she was in this old place, owing to her going abroad in the summer, which I agreed to, thinking it best for her: & naturally she'll look small — just at first — I only say just at first."

Mr Melbury's tone evinced a certain expectation in him very same of that inferiority he affected to deplore; for this advanced & refined being, was she not his own all the time? Not so Giles Winterborne; he felt doubtful — perhaps a trifle cynical, for that strand was wound into him with the rest; He looked at his clothes with misgiving; then with indifference.

It was his custom during the planting season to carry a specimen appletree to market with him as an advertisement of what he dealt in. This had been tied across the gig; & as it might be left behind in the town it would cause no inconvenience to Miss Melbury coming home.

He drove away, the twigs nodding with each step of the horse; & Melbury went indoors. Before the gig had passed out of sight Mr Melbury reappeared & shouted after.

"Here, Giles Winterborne," he said, breathlessly following with some wraps.

× under the boughs, where cobwebs glistened in the now clearing air, lengthening & shortening their shine like elastic needles; he saw homeward pigeons rise as Giles drove past them; & he said to himself/

"It may be very chilly to-night, & she may want something extra about her. Find Giles Winterborne", he added, when the young man, having taken the articles, put the horse in motion once more; "tell her that I should have come myself, but I had particular business with my Uncle Chermond's agent which prevented me. Don't forget."

He watched Winterborne out of sight & with a jerk — a shape into which emotion with him often resolved itself:

"There now, I hope they two will bring it to a point, & have done with it! 'Tis a pity to let such a girl throw herself away upon him — a thousand pities!.... and yet 'tis my duty, for his father's sake."

(The Woodlanders) Chapter V. (Part 2.)

Winterborne sped on his way to Sherton-Abbas without elation and without discomposure. Had he regarded his inner self [illegible]arly, as lovers are now daily more wont to do, he might have felt pride in the discernment of a somewhat rare power in him – that of keeping not only judgment, but emotion, suspended in difficult cases. But he noted it not. Neither did he observe what was also the fact, that though he cherished a true & warm feeling towards Grace Melbury, he was not altogether her fool just now. It must be remembered that he had not seen her for a year.

Arrived at the entrance to a long flat lane, which had taken the spirit out of many a pedestrian in times when to travel meant to walk, with the majority, he saw before him the trim figure of a young woman in pattens, journeying with that steadfast concentration which means purpose & not pleasure. He was soon near enough to see that she was Marty South. Click, click, click, went the pattens still; & she did not turn her head.

She had, however, become aware before this that the driver of the approaching gig was Giles. She had shrunk from being overtaken by him thus; but as it was inevitable she had braced herself up for his inspection by closing her lips so as to make her mouth quite unemotional, & by throwing an additional firmness into her tread. ["Why do you wear pattens Marty?" – "The turnpike is clean enough although the lanes are muddy." ["They save my boots." ["But twelve miles in pattens – 'twill twist your feet off. Come get up & ride with me."

She hesitated, removed her pattens, knocked the gravel out of

nodding specimen = in port of the appletree -

them against the wheel, & mounted. She had so arranged her bonnet with a full border & trimmings that her lack of long hair did not much injure her appearance; though Giles of course, saw that it was gone, & may have guessed her motive in parting with it; such sales, though infrequent, being not unheard of in that locality.

But nature's adornment was still hard by, in fact within two feet of him, though he did not know it. On Marty's basket was a brown-paper packet, and in the packet the chestnut locks, which ~~which she was carrying herself to the barber~~ by reason of the barber's request for secrecy she had not ventured to entrust to other hands.

Giles asked with some hesitation how her father was getting on.

~~She informed him that~~ He was better, she said; ~~that~~ he would be able to work in a day or two; ~~that~~ he would be quite well but for his craze about the tree falling on him.

"You know why I don't ask ~~him~~ for him so often as I might, I suppose?" said Winterborne. "Or don't you know?"

"I think I do."

"Because of the houses?"

She nodded.

"Yes. I am afraid it may seem that my anxiety is about those houses which I should lose by his death, more than about him. Marty; I do feel anxious about the houses, since half my income depends upon them; ~~by~~ but I do likewise care for him; & it almost seems wrong that houses

⁂ ~~It was~~ as if the original dream & vision of their conceiving master-mason, some mediæval Vilars or other, unknown to fame, were for a few minutes flashed down through the centuries to an unappreciative age. Many Lyles saw their eloquent forth ~~Hieroglyphic~~ ~~but~~ on this day of transparency, but could not ~~read it, shape what~~ construe it. He turned into the inn-yard.

should be leased for lives, so as to lead to such mixed feelings."

~~Thus talking~~ "After father's death they will be Mrs Charmond's?"

"They'll be hers."

Thus talking they neared the town. By no pressure would she ride up the street with him. "That's the right of another woman," she said with playful malice as she put on her pattens. "I wonder what you are thinking of! Thank you for the lift in that handsome gig. Good-bye."

He blushed a little, shook his head at her, & drove on ahead into the streets, the churches, the abbey, & other buildings ~~which~~ on this clear bright morning ~~was~~ ~~had~~ having the tiny distinctness of architectural drawings. ※ Marty, following the same track, marched promptly to the chief hairdresser's, Mr Percombe's.

Percombe was ~~more than~~ the chief of his trade ~~in the world~~ in Shertonp-Abbas. ~~He was the world nowhere~~. He had the patronage of ~~the~~ such offshoots as county people who had been obliged to seek the shelter of small towns in that ancient town, ~~Shertonp~~, the local clergy, & so on; for some of whom he had made wigs, while others among them had compensated for neglecting him in their lifetime by patronizing him when they were dead, & letting him shave their corpses. On the strength of all this he ~~called himself~~ had taken down his pole, & called himself "Perruquier to the aristocracy."

Nevertheless this sort of support did not quite fill his children's mouths, & they had to be filled. So behind his house there was a little ~~back~~ yard reached by a passage from the back street, & in that

yard was a pole, & under the pole a shop of quite another description than ~~that~~ the ornamental one in the front street. Here on Saturday nights from seven till ten he took an ~~enormous~~ almost innumerable succession ~~supply~~ of two pences from the farm-labourers who flocked thither in crowds from the country. And thus he lived.

Marty, of course, went to the front shop, & handed her packet to him silently. "Thank you," said the barber quite joyfully, & "I hardly expected it after what you said last night."

She ~~did not reply, but~~ turned aside, while a tear welled up & stood in each eye at this reminder.

"Nothing of what I told you," he whispered, there being others in the shop. "But I can trust you I see."

She had now reached the end of this ~~counter~~ discerning business; & went listlessly to attend to other errands. These occupied her till four o'clock, at which time she recrossed the marketplace, along the street. It was impossible & avoid re-discovering Winter-borne, for standing, as he always did at this season of the year, with his specimen appletree in the ~~market-place~~ midst, the boughs rose above the heads of the crowd & brought a delightful suggestion of orchards among the crowded ~~and the~~ buildings there. When her eye fell upon him for the last time he was standing somewhat apart, holding the tree like an ensign, & looking on the ground instead of pushing his produce as he ought to have been doing. He was, in fact, not a very successful seller either of his trees or of his cider, his habit of speaking his mind when he spoke at all militating against this branch of his business.

While she regarded him he suddenly lifted his eyes in a direction away

from Marty, & his face simultaneously kindled with recognition & surprise. She followed his gaze, & saw walking across to him on a flexible horse a creature in whom she perceived the features of Miss (her she had known as Miss) Grace Melbury, but now looking Glorified & refined above her former level. Winterborne, being fixed to the spot by his appletree, could not advance to meet her: he held out his spare hand with his hat in it, & with some embarrassment beheld her coming on (up-) through the mud to the middle of the Square where he stood.

Miss Melbury's arrival so early was, as Marty saw, could see, unexpected by Giles, which accounted for his not being ready to receive her. Instead Her father had named five o'clock as her probable time, for which reason that hour had been looming out all the day in his forward perspective, like an important edifice on a plain. Now here she was come, he knew not how, & his arranged welcome stultified.

His face became gloomy at her necessity for stepping into the road, & more still at the little look of embarrassment which appeared on hers at having to perform the meeting with him under an appletree ten feet high in the middle of the market-place. Having had occasion to take off the new gloves she had bought to come home in, She held out to him a hand graduating from pink at the tips of the fingers to white at the palm; & the reception formed as pretty a scena, with the tree over their heads, which was not quite by any means an ordinary one, in Sherton-Abbas for many a week. streets. Nevertheless the greeting on her looks face & lips was of a restrained type, which perhaps was not unnatural. For true it was that Giles Winterborne, well attired & well-mannered as

X. Nay, from the highest point of view, precisely to describe a human being, the focus of a universe — impossible. But, apart from transcendentalism, there never probably

he was for a yeoman, looked rough beside her. It had sometimes dimly occurred to him, in his ruminating silentness at Little Hintock, that external phenomena ~~accessories~~ - such as the lowness or height or colour of a hat, the fold of a coat, the make of a boot, or the chance ~~his temporary~~ attitude ~~position~~ or occupation of a limb at the instant of view - may have a great influence upon feminine ~~a woman's~~ opinion of a man's ~~worth, his being intrinsically~~ so frequently founded on ~~irrelevancies~~ non-essentials; but a certain causticity of mental tone towards himself & the world in general had prevented to-day, as always, any enthusiastic action on the strength of that reflection; and her momentary instinct of reserve at first sight of him was the penalty he paid for his laxness.

He gave away the tree to a bystander, as soon as he could find one who would accept the cumbersome gift, & the train moved on towards the inn at which he had put up. Many made as if to ~~would have~~ stepped forward for the pleasure of being recognized by Miss Melbury; but abruptly checking herself she glided behind a carrier's van, saying drily; "No: I haint wanted there"; & critically regarded Winterborne's companion.

It would have been very difficult to describe Grace Melbury with precision, either now or at any time. ~~Probably there never~~ lived a person who was in herself more completely a reductio ad absurdum of attempts to appraise a woman even externally by items of face & figure. Speaking generally, it may be said that she was sometimes beautiful, at other times not beautiful, according to even roughly the state of her health & spirits.

In simple corporeal presentment ~~raiment~~ she was of a fair & clear complexion, rather (slim in build, & rather pale than pink) and elastic in movement. Her look expressed a tendency to wait for others' prompts before uttering her own: (possibly also to wait for others' deeds before her own doing.) In her small delicate mouth, which had perhaps hardly settled down to its matured curves, there was a latent sauciness that might never actively show itself. She had well-formed eyebrows which, had her portrait been painted, would probably have been done in Prout's or Vandyke brown.

There was nothing remarkable in her dress just now, beyond a natural fitness of style that was recent for quietly the streets of Sherton. But indeed, had it been the reverse, & quite striking, it would have meant just as little. Concerned as here. For can there be anything less connected with a woman's personality than drapery which she has neither designed, manufactured, cut, sewed, or even seen, except by a glance of approval when told that such & such a shape & colour must be had because it has been decided by others as imperative at that particular time.

What people therefore saw of her in a cursory view was very little; in truth, mainly something that was not she. The real woman herself as composed was a shadowy conjectural creature who had little to do with the thin outlines presented to Sherton eyes: a shape in the gloom, whose true description could only be approximated by putting together a movement now & a glance then, in that patient & long-continued attentiveness which nothing but watchful loving-kindness ever gives troubles to give.

White line

There was a little delay in their setting out from the town, & Marty South took advantage of it to hasten forward, with the view of escaping them on the way, lest they should feel She walked fast compelled to spoil their tête à tête by asking her to ride. She walked fast, & one third of the journey was done & the evening rapidly darkening, before she perceived any sign of them behind her. Then, while ascending a hill, she dimly saw their vehicle drawing near the lowest part of the incline, their heads slightly bent towards each other; drawn in, no doubt, by their words; as the heads are drawn in by the rein. Have of a pair of horses held in hand. She walked still faster.

But between these & herself there was a carriage, apparently a brougham, with lighted lamps, which as it drew nearer coming in the same direction & Marty ascertained it as Miss Charmond's. When it overtook her, which was not soon on account of her pace — the scene was much darker, & the lights glared in her eyes sufficiently to hide the details of the equipage.

It occurred to Marty that she might take hold behind this carriage & so keep up along with it, to save herself the mortification of being overtaken & picked up for pity's sake by the coming pair. Accordingly as the carriage drew a pace or so in climbing the long ascent she walked close to the wheels, the rays of the nearest lamp penetrating her very pores. She had only just dropped behind when the carriage stopped, & to her surprise the coachman asked her over his shoulder if she would ride, (in obedience to a moment from the interior of the vehicle. What made the question more surprising was that it came from an elder)

Marty gladly assented, for she was very, very weary, after working all night & keeping afoot all day. She mounted beside the coachman, wondering why this good fortune had happened to her. He was rather

a great man, in aspect, & she did not like to enquire of him for some time.

At last she said, "Who has been so kind as to ask me to ride?"

"Mrs Charmond", replied her statuesque companion.

Marty, was moved stirred at the name, so closely connected with her last night's experiences. "Is this her carriage?" she whispered.

"Yes; she's inside."

Marty reflected, & perceived that Mrs Charmond must have recognised her plodding up the hill under the blaze of the lamp; recognised, probably, her stubbly poll (since she had kept away her face) & thought that those stubbles were the result of her own desire.

Marty South, in truth, was not very far wrong. Inside the carriage looked from a ripely-handsome face, was a pair of bright eyes & though behind those bright eyes was a mind fathomed mysteries, beneath them there beat a heart capable of such extempore warmth a heart which could indeed be passionately & imprudently warm on certain occasions. At present, she had acted on a mere impulse, after recognising the girl, possibly feeling gratified at the demanded appearance which signified the success of her agent in obtaining what she had required.

"Tis wonderful that she should ask ye", observed the magisterial coachman presently. "I have never known her do it before; for as a rule she takes no interest in the village folk at all."

Marty said no more, but occasionally turned her head to see if she could get a glimpse of the Olympian creature who, as the coachman

~~Here Mary alighted~~

Here the carriage drew up that the gate might be opened; & in the momentary silence Mary heard ~~a~~ oral a gentle sound, soft as a breeze.

"What's that?" she whispered.

"Mis'es yawning."

"Why should she yawn?"

"Oh, because she's been used to such wonderfully good life, & finds it dull here. She'll soon be off again on account of it."

So rich, & so powerful; & yet to yawn!" the girl murmured. ~~"How things tasted things don't~~ "Then things don't fay with she any more than with we!"

had truly observed, hardly ever emerged from her clouds into the Tempe of the parishioners. But she could discern nothing of the lady. She also looked for Miss Melbury & Winterborne. The nose of their horse sometimes came quite near the back of Mrs Charmond's carriage. But they never attempted to pass it till the latter conveyance turned towards the park gate, when they sped by. Marty now alighted; the lamp again shone upon her, & as the carriage rolled on a soft voice from the interior said to her "Good night." "Good night Ma'm," said Marty. But she had not been able to see the woman who had begun so greatly to interest her — the second person of her own sex who had operated strongly on her mind that day.

Chapter VI.

Meanwhile Winterborne & Grace Melbury had also undergone their little experiences of the same homeward journey.

As he drove off with her out of the town the glances of people fell upon them, the younger Winterborne & Miss Melbury that Mr Winterborne was in a pleasant place, & wondering in what relation he stood towards her. Winterborne himself was unconscious of this. Of the picture they together composed in the landscape Occupied solely with the idea of having her in charge, he did not notice much with outward eye, neither observing how she was dressed nor the effect

~~about the imprint of a daughter's footstep. Nature does not~~
~~stamp on her government with a more French feelings any more~~
~~than she repairs from storms to dark Lower Canadians.~~

Their conversation was ~~unintelligible~~ in briefest phrase for some time, Grace being somewhat disconcerted, though not having mind at first at all that till they were about to start, that Giles was to be her sole conductor, in place of her father. When they were in the open country he spoke.

"Don't Brownley's farm-buildings look strange to you, now they have been moved bodily from the hollow where they old ones stood to the top of the hill?"

She admitted that they did, though she should not have seen any difference in them if he had not pointed it out.

"They had a good crop of ~~bitter-sweets~~ Harmers bitter-sweets — they couldn't grind them all" (nodding towards an orchard where some heaps of apples had been left lying, ever since the ingathering)

She said yes, but looking at another orchard.

"Why — you are looking at John-apple-trees! You know bitter-sweets ~~Harmers~~ — you used to, well enough?"

"I am afraid I have forgotten — and it is getting too dark to distinguish."

Winterborne did not continue. It seemed as if the knowledge & interests which had formerly moved Grace's mind had quite died away from her. He wondered whether the special attributes ~~features~~ of his ~~character~~ image in the past had evaporated like these other things.

~~The truth~~ However that might be, the fact remained that where he at present was (merely) this,

~~about the imprint of a daughter's footstep. Nature does not~~
~~keep on her government with a view to such feelings any more~~
~~than she refrains from clouds to dark Lochleven.~~

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~~The truth~~ However that might be, the fact remained that where he at present was (merely this,

the notes of piano & harp trembling in the air from the open windows adjoin-
∴ Moreover they were girls – and this was a fact which Grace Melling's
delicate femininity could not lose sight of – whose parents Giles would
have addressed with deferential Sir or Madam.

⁂ For all his woodland sequestration Giles knew ~~that~~ the primitive
simplicity
of the subject he had started; & now ~~made a deeper~~ sounded a
deeper ~~drain~~ note.

was seeing John-apples & farm-buildings she was beholding a far remoter scene, a scene no less innocent & simple, indeed, but much contrasting: a broad lawn in the fashionable suburb of a city, the dk evergreen leaves shining in the evening sun, amid which bounding girls, gracefully clad in artistic arrangements of blue, brown, ~~red~~ white, ~~& black~~, & ~~golden brown~~, were playing at games, with laughter, ~~& girls whose palette, like, would have admitted with advantage Titian's~~ & chat, in all the pride of life. Beside this richtoned scene the homely farmsteads did not quite hold their own from her present twenty-year front of survey.

"It was very odd — what we said to each other years ago, ~~he began again~~ — I often think of it. I mean on saying that if we still liked each other when you were twenty and I twenty-five we'd —"

"It was child's talk."

"H'm?" said Giles suddenly.

"I mean we were young," said she more considerately. That gruff manner of his in making enquiries reminded her that he was unaltered in much. ~~You were sitting beside me at the back of your father's covered~~

"Yes. — I beg your pardon, Miss Melbury; your father sent me to meet you to-day."

"I know it — & I am glad of it."

He seemed satisfied with her tone, & went on: "at that time you were sitting beside me at the back of your father's covered car when we were coming home from gipsying, all the party being squeezed in together as tight ~~as bees in a box~~ as sheep in an auction-pen. It got darker & darker, & I said — I forget the exact words — but I put my arm round your

waist, & there you let it stay till your father, sitting in front, suddenly stopped telling his story to Farmer Bollen, to light his pipe. The flash shone into the car, & showed us all up distinctly; my arm flew from your waist like lightning; yet not so quickly but that some of 'em had seen, & laughed at us. Yet your father, to our amazement, instead of being angry, was mild as milk, & seemed quite pleased. Have you forgot all that, or haven't you?"

She owned that she remembered it very well, now that he mentioned the circumstances. "But mercy, I must have been in short frocks," she said.

"Come now, Miss Melbury; that won't do! Short frocks indeed. You know better as well as I."

Grace thereupon declared that she would not argue with an old friend she valued so highly as him, saying the words, with the easy clumsiness that will be polite at all costs. It might possibly be true, she added, that she was getting on in girlhood when that event took place; but if it were so, then she was virtually no less than an old woman now, so far did the time seem removed from her present. "Do you ever look at things pictorially instead of personally?" she asked.

"I can't say that I do" answered Giles, his eyes lingering fore ahead upon a dark spot, which proved to be a brougham.

"I think you may sometimes with advantage," said she. "Look at yourself as a pitcher drifting on the stream with other pitchers, & consider what contrivances are most desirable for avoiding cracks in general, & not only for saving your poor one. — Shall I tell you all about Bath

or Cheltenham, or places on the Continent that I visited last summer?"

"With all my heart."

She then described places & persons in such terms as might have been ~~detailed~~ used for that purpose by any woman to any man within the four seas, so entirely absent from that description was everything specially appertaining to her own existence. When she had done she said gaily, "Now do you tell me in return what has happened in Hintock since I have been away."

"Anything to keep the conversation away from her & me ~~themselves~~;" said Giles within him. ~~& himself~~. { It was true. Cultivation had so far proceeded in the soil of Miss Melbury's mind as to lead her to talk of by rote of anything advanced save that she knew well, & had the greatest interest in developing: that is to say, herself.

He had not proceeded far with his somewhat halting narration when they drew near the carriage that had been preceding them for some time. Miss Melbury ~~said~~ enquired ~~of him~~ if he knew whose carriage it was.

Winterborne, although he had seen it, had not taken it into account. On examination he said it was Mrs Charmond's

Grace watched the vehicle, & its easy roll, & seemed to feel more nearly akin to it than to the one she was in.

"Pooh — We can polish off the mileage as well as they, come to that," said Winterborne reading her mind: & ~~not being~~ rising to emulation at what it bespoke. This it was which had brought the nose of Mr Melbury's old grey close to the back of Mrs Charmond's much eclipsing ~~comely~~ vehicle. he whipped on the horse.

"There's Marty South sitting up with the coachman," said he, discerning her by her dress.

"Ah - poor Marty! I must ask her to come & see me this very evening. How does she happen to be riding here?"

"I don't know. It is very singular".

Thus these people, with converging destinies went along the road together, till Winterborne, leaving the track of the carriage, turned into Little Hintock, where almost the first house was the timber-merchant's. Pencils of dancing light streamed out of the windows sufficiently to show the white Lamentinus flowers, & the polished leaves of laurel glance over. The interior of the rooms could be seen distinctly, warmed up by the fire-flames, which in the parlour were reflected from the glass of the pictures & book-case, & in the kitchen from the utensils & ware.

"Let us look at the dear place for a moment before we call them," she said.

In the kitchen dinner was preparing, for Mrs Melbury dined at one o'clock at other times, to-day the meal had been kept back for Grace. A rickety old spit was in motion, its end being fixed in the fire-dog, & the whole kept going by means of a cord conveyed over pulleys along the ceiling, to a large stone suspended from a cord in a corner of the room. Old Grammer Oliver came & wound it up with a rattle like that of a mill.

In the parlour a large shade of Mrs Melbury's head fell on the wall & ceiling; but before the girl had regarded this room many moments

their presence was discovered, & her father & step-mother came out to welcome her. The character of the Melbury family was of that kind which evinces some shyness in showing strong emotion among ~~strangers~~ each other; a trait frequent in rural households, & one which stands in curiously inverse relations to ~~their other~~ most of the peculiarities ~~which~~ distinguishing villagers ~~them~~ from the people of towns. Thus hiding their warmer feelings under commonplace talk, ~~Grace was received with~~ all round, Grace's reception produced no extraordinary demonstrations. But that more was felt than was enacted appeared from the fact that her father, in taking her indoors, quite forgot the presence of Giles, without as did also Grace herself. He said nothing; but ~~taking~~ took the jug round the yard & unexpectedly & called out from the spar-house the man who particularly attended to these matters when there ~~was not~~ was no conversation progressing among the copse-workers inside. ~~He~~ Winterborne then returned to the door with the intention of entering the house.

The family had gone into ~~bustled~~ the parlour, & were still absorbed in themselves. The fire was as before ~~still~~ the only light, & it irradiated ~~fell upon~~ from Grace's face & hands, so as to ~~making~~ them look wondrously smooth & fair ~~bright~~ beside those of the ~~other~~ two elders; shining also through the loose hair about her temples as sunlight through a brake. Her father was surveying her ~~with a sort of~~ in a dazed conjecture, ~~as~~ so much had she developed & progressed in manner & stature since he last had set eyes on her.

Observing these things Winterborne remained dubious by the door, mechanically tracing with his fingers certain time-worn letters carved in the jamb — initials of bygone generations of householders who had lived & died there. ~~cut into the jamb of the doorway~~ [No, he declared to himself; he would not enter & join the family;] they had forgotten him, & it was enough for to-day that he had brought her home. Still, he was a little surprised that her father's eagerness for Grace should have resulted in such an anti-climax as this. [He walked softly away into the lane towards his own house, looking back when he reached the turning from which he could get a last glimpse of the timber-merchant's roof. He hazarded guesses as to what Grace was saying just at that moment, & murmured with some self-derision, "nothing about me!" He looked also in the other direction & saw against the sky the thatched ~~roof~~ hip & solitary chimney of Marty's cottage, & thought of her, too, struggling bravely along under that humbler shelter, among her spar-pads, & pots & skimmers.

~~The conversation at the timber merchant's meeting [illegible] was not about Giles Winterborne. The appearance of his daughter & manner during the evening so much impressed him that he had not absolutely forgotten Mrs Melbury so much as seemed for a time. Mrs Melbury so much impressed that he had seem for a time forgotten her entirely. Giles's image had not entirely forgotten her conductor home, the young man he had thrust quite into the obscurest recesses of his brain.~~

~~However his business with Mrs Chasmond that morning~~

~~The conversation~~ At the timber-merchants, in the mean time, the conversation flowed; ~~but it was not concerning it was by no means the subject~~ as Giles Winterborne ~~was thinking more~~ had rightly enough surmised, on subjects in which he had no share.

Among the ~~alluding~~ matters here were, for one, the effect upon Mr Melbury of the womanly mien & manners of his daughter, which took him so much unawares that, though it did not make him absolutely forget the existence of her conductor however, it thrust Giles's image back into quite the obscurest cellarage of his brain.

Another was his interview with Mrs Charmond's agent that morning, at which the lady herself had been present for a few minutes. Melbury had purchased some standing timber from her a long time before, & now that the date had come for felling it he was left to pursue almost his own course. This was what the household were actually talking of during Giles's cogitation without; & Melbury's satisfaction with the clear atmosphere that had arisen between himself & the deity of the groves which ~~enclosed~~ his residence was the cause of a counterbalancing mistiness on the side towards Winterborne.

"So thoroughly does the Trust me," said Melbury, "that I might on my own judgment, fell, every top, or lop, any stick o' timber whatever in her woods, & fix the price o't, & settle the matter. But ~~I don't be quite satisfied~~ name it all, I would n't do such a thing. However, it may be useful to have this good understanding with her.....and wish she took more interest in the place, & stayed ~~would stay~~ here all the year round."

"I am afraid 'tis not her regard for you, but her dislike of Hintock," that makes her so easy about the trees," said Mrs Melbury.

When dinner was over Grace took a candle & began to ramble pleasurably through the rooms of her old home, from which she had latterly become well-nigh an alien. Each work-laden object revived a memory, & simultaneously modified it. The chambers seemed lower than they had appeared on any previous occasion of her return, the surfaces of both walls & ceilings standing in such relations to the eye that it could not avoid taking microscopic note of their irregularities & old-fashion. Her own bedroom was at once a little more familiar than when she had left it, & yet a face estranged. The world of little things therein gazed at her in helpless stationariness, as though they had tried & been unable to make any progress without her presence. Over the place where her candle had been accustomed to stand, when she had used to read in bed till the midnight hour, there was still the brown spot of smoke. She did not know that her father had taken especial care to keep it from being cleaned off.

Having concluded her perambulation of this now melancholy-commodious edifice Grace began to feel tired, that she had come a long journey since the morning; & when her father had taken up his wife, as well as his wife, namely, to see that her room was completely & effectually burning, she prepared to retire for the night. No sooner, however, was she in bed, than her momentary sleeplessness took itself off, & she wished she had stayed up longer. She amused herself by listening to & connecting the

·X· Her curiosity was so keenly widely awakened by the phenomenon
that she sat up in bed, & stared steadily at the brilliant object shine. Any
ance of this sort, sufficient to excite attention anywhere, was no less th
a marvel in Hintock, as Grace had known the hamlet. Almost every
diurnal nocturnal effect in that woodland place had hitherto been the direct
result of the seasons changes in the regular terrestrial roll which
produced it; but here was something dissociated from these normal sequence
& foreign and foreign to local habit & knowledge.

old familiar noises that she could hear still going on downstairs, & by looking towards the window ere she lay. The blind had been drawn up, as she used to have it when a girl, & she could just discern the dim tree-tops against the sky on the neighbouring hill. Beneath this meeting-line of light & shade nothing was visible save one solitary point of light, which blinked as the tree-twigs waved to & fro before its beams. From its position it seemed to radiate from the window of a house on the hill-side. The house had been empty when she ever last at home, & she wondered who inhabited the place now.

Her conjectures, however, were not intently carried on, & she ever watching the light quite idly, when it changed colour gradually, & at length grew blue as sapphire. There it remained several minutes, & then it passed through violet to red. ⁂

It was about this moment that Grace heard the household below, preparing to retire, the most emphatic voice in the proceeding being that of her father bolting the doors. Then the stairs creaked, & her father & mother passed her chamber. The last to come was Grammer Oliver.

Grace slid out of bed, ran across the room, & lifting the latch said "I am not asleep Grammer. Come in & talk to me".

Before Grammer the old woman had entered Grace was again under the bedclothes. Grammer set down her candlestick, & heaped heavily on the edge of Miss Melbury's coverlet.

"I want you to tell me what light that is I see on the hill-side," said Grace.

Mrs Oliver looked across. "Oh, that," she said, "is from the doctor's. He's often doing things of that sort. Perhaps you don't know that we've a doctor living here now — Mr Fitzpiers by name?"

Grace admitted that she had not heard of him.

"Well then, miss, he's come here to get up a practice. I know him very well, much going there to keep 'em clean scrub sometimes, which your father said I might do if I wanted to in my spare time. Being a bachelor-man he've only a lad in the house. Oh yes, I know him very well. Sometimes he'll talk to me as if I were his own mother."

"Indeed."

"Yes. 'Grammer', he said one day when I asked him why he came here where there's hardly anybody living, 'I'll tell you why I came here. I took a map, & I marked on it where Dr Jones's practice ends to the north of this district, & where Mr Taylor's ends on the south, & little Jimmy Green's on the east, & somebody else's to the west. Then I took a pair of compasses, & found the exact middle of the country that was left between these bounds, & that middle was Little Hintock; so here I am'.... But Lord, there: poor young man!"

"Why?"

He said, "Grammer Oliver, I've been here three months, & although there are a good many people in the Hintocks & the villages round, & a scattered practice is often a very good one, I don't seem to get

(the oddest of notions:

X And yet he's a projick, a real projick, & says ~~odd things~~. "Ah, Gram

he said at another time, "Let me tell you that Everything is Nothing. There

only me & not me in the whole world." And he told that no man can

help what they ~~do~~ did. any more than the hands of a clock ... Yes, he's a man of strange meditation

seem to see as far

~~at deep~~ as the north star."

many patients. And there's no society at all; & I'm pretty near melancholy mad,' he said with a great yawn. 'I should be quite if it were not for my books, & my lab – laboratory, & what not.' Grammer, I was made for higher things'. And then he'd yawn & yawn again."

"Was he really made for higher things, do you think? I mean, is he clever?"

"~~That's the last he'll see of him.~~

"Well, ~~I don't know~~ no. How can he be clever? He may be able to join up a broken man or woman after accident, & put his finger upon an ache if you tell him nearly where 'tis; but these young men – they should live to my time of life, & then they'd see how clever whether they were at five & twenty! ~~clever or not.~~

"He will soon go away, no doubt."

"I don't think so." Grace did not say "why?", & the Grammer hesitated. At last she went on, "Don't tell your father or mother, miss, if I let you know a secret?"

"~~Why should I not~~" Grace gave the required promise.

"Well – he talks of buying me; so he won't go away just yet."

"~~Bought~~ Buying you – how?"

"Not my soul – my body, when I'm dead. One day when I was there cleaning he said, 'Grammer, you've a large brain' – a very large organ of brain, he said – "a woman's is usually four ounces less than a man's; but yours is man's size". Well then – hee. hee! – after he'd flattered me a bit, like that he said he'd give me ten pounds to have me as a natomy after my death. Well, knowing I'd no child nor child left, & nobody with any interest

around which she allowed her reasoning fancy to play in vague eddies that shaped the doings of the philosopher behind that light on the lines of the intelligence just received. It was strange when she came back from the world to Hintock, to find in one of its nooks, like a tropical plant in a hedgerow, a nucleus of advanced ideas and practices which had nothing in common with the life around. Chemical experiments, anatomical projects, & metaphysical conceptions had found a strange home here.

Thus she remained thinking, the pursuits of the man behind the light imagined mingling with conjectural sketches of his personality; till her eyes fell together with their own heaviness, & she slept.

Chapter VII - (opposite)

in me, I thought, faith, if I can be of any use to my fellow-creatures after I'm gone they are welcome to my services; so I said I'd think it over, & would most likely agree, & take ~~the story that I exposed & prefer; & took~~ the ten pounds. Now this is a secret, miss, between us two. The money has been very useful to me; & I see no harm in it."

"Of course there's no harm. But O Grammer — how can you think do it! I wish you hadn't told me!"

"I wish I hadn't — if you don't like to know it, miss. But you needn't mind. Lord — hee-hee! — I shall keep him waiting many a year yet, bless ye!"

"I hope you will, I am sure."

The girl thereupon fell into such deep reflection that conversation languished, & Grammer Oliver, taking her candle, hissed Miss Mellony good-night. The latter's eyes rested on the distant glimmer ~~of the light, till they fell asleep & closed in sleep~~.

Chapter VII.

Certain Kaleidoscopic dreams of a weird alchemist-surgeon, Grammer Oliver's skeleton & the face of Giles Winterborne, brought Grace Mellony to the morning of the next day. It was fine. A north wind was blowing — that not unacceptable compromise between the atmospheric cutlery of the eastern blast & the spongy gales of the west quarter. She looked from her window in the direction of the light of the previous evening, & could just

discern through the trees the shape of the surgeon's house. Somehow, in the broad practical daylight, that unknown & lonely gentleman seemed to be shorn of much of the interest which had invested his personality & pursuits in the hours of darkness, & as Grace's dressing proceeded he faded from her mind.

Meanwhile Winterborne, though half-amused at her father's fears, was rendered a little restless by Miss Melbury's behaviour. Despite his dry self-control He could not help looking continually from his own door towards the timber-merchant's, in the probability of somebody's emergence therefrom. His attention was justified by the appearance of at length the two figures, that of Mr Melbury himself, & Grace beside him. They stepped out in a direction towards the densest quarter of the wood, & Winterborne walked contemplatively behind them, till he soon saw all three under the trees.

Although now the season of frost-brights had set in, there were sheltered hollows amid the Hintock plantations & copses in which a late tardy leave-taking time was the rule with the foliage than on windy summits. This caused here & there an apparent mixture of the seasons; so that in some of the dells that they passed by holly berries in full red were found growing beside oak & hagel as yet not far removed from green, & brambles whose verdure was rich & deep as in the month of August. To Grace these well-known peculiarities were as an old painting restored.

Now could be beheld that change from the handsome to the ominous which the features of a wood undergo at the ingress of the winter months. Angles were taking the place of curves, & lines of reticulation of surfaces —

— a change constituting a ~~instance~~ ~~sudden~~ in which sudden lapse from the ornate to the primitive ~~in nature~~ on Nature's canvas, ~~assembling~~ & comparable to a retrospective movement ~~change~~ step from the art of an advanced school of painting to that of the Pacific Islanders.

Winterborne followed & kept his eye upon the two figures as they threaded their way through the sylvan phenomena; Mr Melbury's ~~this~~ long legs, & gaiters drawn in below the knee at the ancles, his slight stoop, his habit of getting lost in thought & arousing himself with an ejaculation of "Hah!" — accompanied with an upward jerk of the head, ~~made him~~ composed a personage recognizable by his neighbours as far as he could be seen. It seemed as if the squirrels & birds knew him. One of the former would occasionally run from the path to hide behind the arm of some tree, which the little animal carefully edged round pari passu with Melbury & his daughter's movement onward ~~as they walked~~ assuming a mock manner, as though he were saying "Ho-ho: you are only a timber-merchant, & carry no gun!"

They went noiselessly over mats of starry moss, ~~the fairy dew~~ rustled through ~~the~~ interspersed tracts of leaves, skirted trunks with spreading roots whose mossed rinds made them like hands wearing green gloves, elbowed old elms & ashes ~~beeches~~ with great forks ~~prongs~~ in which stood ~~lay~~ pools of water that overflowed in green cascades. on rainy days drew down their stems. On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here, as anywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf

was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen eat the vigour of the ~~sapling~~ stalk, & the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.

They dived ~~under~~ amid beeches under which nothing grew, the younger boughs still retaining their beetle leaves, that rustled in the breeze with a sound almost metallic, like the sheet-iron foliage of the fabled Jarnvid wood. Some flecks of white in Grace's drapery had kept enabled files to keep her thereafter in view till this time; but now he lost sight of them, & was obliged to follow by ear (no difficult matter, for every wood-pigeon rose from its perch with a continual clash of its wings against the branches with well-nigh force enough to break every stick). By taking the track of this noise he soon came to a stile.

Was it worth while to go further? He examined the doughy soil at the foot of the stile, & saw amongst the large sole & heel tracks an impression of a slighter kind from a boot that was obviously not local, for Winterborne knew all the cobblers patterns in that district, because they were very few to know. ~~He was~~ The picture was enough to make him swing himself over & proceed. The character of the woodland now changed. The bases of the smaller trees were nibbled bare by rabbits, & at divers points heaps of fresh-made chips, & the newly cut stool of a tree, stared white through the undergrowth. There had been a large fall of timber this year, which explained the meaning

of some sounds that soon reached him.

A voice was shouting intermittently in a sort of human bark, which reminded Giles that there was a sale of trees that day. Melbury would naturally be present; thereupon Winterborne remembered that he himself wanted a few faggots; and entered upon the scene.

A large group of buyers stood round the auctioneer, or followed him when, between his pauses, he wandered on from one lot of plantation wood produce to another, like some other philosopher of the Peripatetic school delivering his lectures in the shady groves of the Lyceum. His companions were timber-dealers, yeomen, farmers, rick-layers & others; mostly woodland men who on that account could afford to be curious in their walking-sticks, which consequently exhibited various monstrosities of vegetation, the chief being corkscrew shapes in black & white thorn, brought to that pattern by the slow torture of an encircling woodbine during their growth, as the Chinese have been said to mould human beings into grotesque toys by continued compression in infancy. Two women, wearing men's jackets on their gowns, conducted in the rear of the halting procession a pony-cart containing a tapped barrel of beer, from which they drew replenished horns that were handed round, with bread-&-cheese from a basket.

The auctioneer adjusted himself to circumstances by using his walking-stick as a hammer, & knocked down the lot on any convenient object that took his fancy, such as the crown of a little

boy's head, or the shoulders of a bystander who had no business there except to taste the brew; a proceeding which would have been deemed humourous but for the air of stern rigidity in which that auctioneer's face preserved ending to show that the eccentricity was a result of that absence of mind which is engendered by ~~much~~ the press of affairs, & no freak of fancy at all.

Mrs Melbury stood slightly apart from the rest of the Grace beside him, clinging closely to his arm; her ~~newly-shaped~~ modern attire looking almost odd where everything else was old-fashioned, ~~& making~~ and throwing over the familiar furniture ~~style~~ of the ~~different~~ trees ~~a monument of style~~ a homeliness that seemed to demand improvement by the addition of a few contemporary novelties also. Grace seemed ~~to look at~~ regard the selling with the interest which attaches to ~~old things~~ memories revived after an interval of obliviousness

Winterborne went & stood close to them; the timber-merchant spoke, & ~~went on with~~ continued his buying; ~~& Grace~~ merely smiled. To justify his presence there Winterborne began bidding for timber & faggots that he did not want, pursuing the occupation in an abstracted mood, in which the auctioneers voice seemed to become one of the natural sounds of the woodland. A few flakes of snow descended, at the sight of which ~~some~~ a robin, alarmed at these signs of ~~the coming~~ imminent winter, & seeing that no offence was meant by the human invasion, ~~went on~~ came & perched on the ~~tips~~ tip of the faggots that were being sold, ~~& looked in~~ & looked into the auctioneers face, whilst waiting for some chance crumb from the

breadbasket. Standing a little behind Grace, Winterborne observed how one flake & another would sail downward & prettily settle on a curl of her hair, & how another would choose her shoulder, & another the edge of her bonnet; which took up so much of his attention that his biddings proceeded incoherently; & when the auctioneer said every now & then with a nod towards him, "Yours, Mr. Winterborne," he had no idea whether he had bought faggots, poles, or log-wood

He regretted, with some causticity of humour, that her father should show such inequalities of temperament as to keep Grace so tightly on his arm to-day, when he had quite lately seemed anxious to recognise their betrothal as a fact. And thus musing, & joining in no conversation with other buyers except when directly addressed, he followed the assemblage hither & thither till the end of the auction, when Giles for the first time realized what his purchases had been. Hundreds of faggots, & divers lots of timber, had been set down to him, when all he had required had been a few bundles of spray for his odd man Robert Creedle's use in baking & lighting fires

Business being over he turned to speak to the timber-merchant. But Melbury's manner was short & distant; & Grace too looked reproached & reproachful. Winterborne then discovered that he had been unwittingly bidding against her father, & picking up his favourite lots in spite of him. With a very few words they left the spot, & pursued their way homeward.

Giles was extremely sorry at what he had done, & remained standing under the trees, all having strayed silently away. He saw Melbury & his daughter pass down a glade without looking back, while they moved slowly through it a lady appeared on horseback in the middle distance, the line of her progress converging upon that of Melbury's. They met, Melbury took off his hat, & she reined in her horse. A conversation was evidently in progress between Grace & her father & this equestrian, in whom he was almost sure that he recognised Mrs Charmond, less by her outline than by the livery of the groom who had halted some yards off.

They did not part till after a prolonged pause, during which much seemed to be said. When Melbury & Grace resumed their walk it was with something of a lighter tread than before.

Winterborne then turned his own course homeward. He was unwilling that coldness should grow up between himself & the Melburys for any trivial reason, & in the evening he went to their house. On drawing near the gate his attention was attracted by the sight of one of the bedrooms blinking into a state of illumination. On it stood Grace lighting several candles, her right hand elevating the taper, her left hand on her bosom, her face thoughtfully fixed on each wick as it kindled, as if she saw in every flame's growth the rise of a life to maturity. He wondered what such unusual brilliancy could mean to-night. On

getting in-doors he found her father & step-mother in a state of suppressed excitement, which at first he could not comprehend

"I am sorry about my biddings to-day," said Giles. "I don't know what I was doing." I have come to say that any of the lots you may require are yours."

"Oh," never mind, never mind," replied the timber-merchant with a slight wave of his hand. "I have so much else to think of that I nearly had forgot it. Just now there, too, there are matters of a different kind from trade to attend to; so don't let it concern ye."

As the timber-merchant spoke as it were down to him from a higher moral plane than his own, Giles turned to Mrs Melbury.

"Grace is going to the House to-morrow," she said quietly. "She is looking out her things now. I daresay she is wanting me this minute to assist her." Thereupon Mrs Melbury left the room.

Nothing is more remarkable than the independent personality of the tongue now & then. Mr Melbury knew that his words had been a sort of boast. He decried boasting, particularly to Giles; yet whenever the subject was Grace, his judgment resigned the ministry of speech in spite of him.

Winterborne felt surprise, pleasure, & also a little apprehension at the news. He repeated Mrs Melbury's words.

"Yes," said paternal pride, not sorry to have dragged out of him what he could not in any circumstances have kept in, "Cunning

home from the woods this afternoon we met Mrs Charmond out for a ride. She spoke to me on a little matter of business; & then got acquainted with Grace. 'Twas wonderful how she took to Grace in a few minutes: that free-masonry of education made 'em close at once. Naturally enough she was amazed that such an article as that - ha-ha! could come out of my house. At last it led on to Miss Grace being asked to the House. So she's busy hunting up her furbelows & frills to go in." As Giles remained in thought without responding Mellony continued; "But I'll call her downstairs?"

"No, no; don't do that, since she's busy," said Winterborne.

Mellony, feeling from the gloomy grim manner, that his own talk had been too much at Giles & too little to him, repented at once. His face changed & he said, in lower tones, with an effort: "She's yours Giles, as far as I am concerned; I can't force her." Thanks - my best thanks..... But right now I think, since it is all understood between us about the bidding, that I'll not interrupt her now. I'll step homeward again, & call another time."

On leaving the house he looked up at the bedroom where Grace, surrounded by a sufficient number of candles to answer all purposes of self-criticism, was standing before a cheval glass that her father had lately bought expressly for her use; she was bonneted, cloaked, & gloved, & glanced over her shoulder into the mirror, estimating her aspect. Her face was lit with the natural elation of a young girl hoping to inaugurate on the morrow an intimate acquaintance with a new & powerful friend.

Chapter VIII.

The inspiriting appointment which had led Grace Melbury to indulge in a six-candle illumination for the arrangement of her attire carried her over the ground the next morning with a springy tread. Her sense of being properly appreciated on her own native soil seemed to brighten the atmosphere & herbage around her, as the glowworm's lamp irradiates the grass. Thus she moved along, a vessel of emotion, going to empty itself on she knew not what.

Twenty minutes walking through copses, over a stile, & along an upland lawn, brought her to the verge of a deep glen, at the bottom of which Hintock House appeared immediately beneath her eye. To describe it as standing in a hollow would not express the situation of the manor-house; it stood in a hole, notwithstanding that hole was full of beauty. From the spot which Grace had reached a stone could easily have been thrown over, or into the birds'-nested chimneys of the mansion. Its walls were surmounted by a battlemented parapet; but the grey lead roofs were quite visible behind it, with their gutters, & rolls, & sky-lights, & servants' windows; together with & incised letterings & shoe-patterns cut by idlers thereon.

The front of the house exhibited an ordinary manorial presentation of Elizabethan windows, mullioned & hooded, worked in rich buff-coloured free-stone from local quarries. The ashlar of the walls, where not overgrown with ivy & other creepers, was coated with lichen of every shade, intensifying its appearance with its nearness to the ground till, below the plinth, it merged in moss.

Above the house to the back was a dense plantation, the roots of whose trees were above the level of the chimneys. The corresponding high ground on which Grace stood was richly grassed, with only an old tree here & there. A few sheep lay about which as they ruminated looked quietly into the bedroom windows. The situation of the house, prejudicial to humanity, was a stimulus to vegetation, on which account an endless shearing of the heavy-armed ivy was necessary, & a continual lopping of trees & shrubs. It was a place built in times when human constitutions were damp-proof, when shelter from the boisterous was all that men thought of in choosing a dwelling-place, the insidious being beneath their notice; & its hollow site was an ocular reminder by its unfitness for modern lives, of the fragility to which these have declined. The highest architectural cunning could have done nothing to make Hintock House dry & salubrious; & ruthless ignorance could have done little to make it unpicturesque. It was vegetable nature's own home; a spot to inspire the painter & poet of still life — if they did not suffer too much from the relaxing atmosphere & to draw groups from the gregariously disposed. Grace descended the green escarpment by a zigzag path into the drive, which swept round beneath the slope. The exterior of the house had been familiar to her from her childhood but she had never been inside, ——

& the ~~nearness of~~ approach to knowing an old thing in a new way was a lively experience. It was with a little flutter that she was shown in; but she recollected that Mrs Charmond would probably be alone. Up to a few days before this time ~~she~~ that lady had been accompanied in her comings, stayings, & goings, by a relative, believed to be her aunt; latterly, however, these two ladies had separated, owing, it was supposed, to a quarrel; & Mrs Charmond had been left ~~alone~~ desolate. Being presumably a woman who did not care for solitude, this recent deprivation might possibly account for her sudden interest in Grace.

Mrs Charmond was at the end of a gallery opening from the hall when Miss Melbury was announced, & saw her through the glass doors between them. She came forward with a smile on her face & told the young girl it was good of her to come.

"Ah, you have noticed those," she said seeing that Grace's eyes were attracted by some curious objects against the walls. "They are man-traps. My husband was a connoisseur in man-traps & spring-guns & such articles, collecting them from all his neighbours. He knew the histories of all these — which gin had broken a man's leg, which gun had killed a man. That one, I remember his saying, had been set by a gamekeeper in the track of a notorious poacher; but the keeper, forgetting what he had done, went that way himself, received the charge in the lower part of his body, & died of the wound.

I don't like them here; but I've never yet given directions for them to be taken away," she added playfully. "Man-traps are of rather ominous significance where a person of our sex lives are they not?"

Grace was bound to smile; but that side of womanliness was one which in her inexperience had no great zest in contemplating

"They are interesting, no doubt as relics of a barbarous time happily past," she said, looking thoughtfully at the varied designs of these instruments of torture, some with semi-circular jaws, some with rectangular; most of them with long sharp teeth, but a few with none, so that their jaws looked like the blank gums of old age.

"Well we must not take them too seriously," said Mrs Charmond with an indolent turn of her head, & they moved on inwards. When she had shown her visitor different articles in cabinets that she deemed likely to interest her, some tapestries, wood carvings, ivories, miniatures &c so on — always with a mien of listless listlessness which might either have been constitutional, or partly owing to the situation of the place, they sat down to an early cup of tea.

"Will you pour it out please Miss — do," she said leaning back in her chair & placing her hand above her forehead, while her almond eyes — those long eyes so common to the angelic legions of early Italian art — became longer, & her voice more languishing. She showed that oblique-mannered softness ~~which is indicative of pertains sometimes called~~

which is perhaps most frequent in women of darker complexion & more lymphatic temperament than Mrs Charmond's; who lingeringly smile their meanings to men rather than speak them, who inveigle rather than prompt, & take advantage of events rather than steer.

"I am the most inactive woman when I am here," she said. "I think sometimes I was born to live & do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we fancy we do sometimes in dreams. But that cannot be really my destiny, & I must struggle against such fancies."

"I am so sorry you do not enjoy ~~activity~~ exertion — it is quite sad." I wish I could ~~do somet~~ lend you and make you very happy."

There was something so sympathetic, so appreciative, in the sound of Grace's voice, that it impelled people to play havoc with their customary reservations in talking to her. "It is ~~very good~~ tender & kind of you to ~~say~~ feel that," ~~Lucy~~ said Mrs Charmond. "Perhaps I have given you the ~~impression~~ notion that my langour is more than it really is. But this place oppresses me, & I have a plan of going abroad a good deal." Regarding Grace with a final glance of criticism she seemed to make up her mind to consider the young girl satisfactory, & ~~added~~ continued, "I used to go with a relative, but ~~as~~ that arrangement has dropped through. Now I am often impelled to record my impressions of times & places. I have often thought of writing a New Sentimental Journey. But I cannot find energy enough to do it alone. When I am at different places in the South of Europe ~~in the Continent~~, I feel my impressions conceptions a crowd of ideas & fancies throwing upon me ~~continually~~ continually; but to unfold writing materials

take up a cold steel pen, & put there impressions down systematically ~~in solid phrases~~ on cold smooth paper — that I cannot do. So I have thought that if I always could have somebody at my elbow with whom I am in sympathy, I might dictate any ideas that come into my head. And directly I had made your acquaintance the other day it struck me that you would suit me so well. Would you like to undertake it? You might read to me, too, if desirable. Will you think it over, & ask your parents ~~about~~ if they are willing?"

"Oh yes," said Grace. "I am almost sure they would be very glad."

"You are so accomplished I hear; I should be quite honoured by such intellectual ~~your~~ company."

Grace, modestly blushing, deprecated any such idea.

"Do you keep up your lucubrations at Little Hintock?"

"~~I fear not~~. Oh no. Lucubrations are not unknown at ~~Little~~ Hintock; but they are not carried on by me."

"What — another student in that retreat?"

"There is a surgeon lately ~~past~~ come ~~to settle there~~ — & I have heard that he reads a great deal — I see his light sometimes through the trees late at night."

"Oh yes — a doctor — I believe I was told of ~~him~~ him. It is a ~~the Wheat~~ strange place for him to settle in."

"It is a convenient centre for a practice, they say. But He does not confine his studies to medicine, it seems. He investigates theology, & metaphysics, & all sorts of subjects."

"What is his name?

"Fitzpiers. He represents a very old family I believe — ~~The~~ the Fitzpierses

of ~~Horton~~ Buckbury-Fitzpiers — not a great many miles from here."

"I am not sufficiently local to know the history of the family. I was never in the county till my husband brought me here." Mrs Charmond did not care to pursue this line of investigation. What enigmas mysterious merits might attach to family antiquity, it was one which she could not claim, either on her own account or her late husbands. The daughter of an eminent painter she might have said she could claim more. "It is of rather more importance to know what the man is himself than what his family is," she said, "if he is going to practise upon us as a surgeon. Have you seen him?"

Grace had not. "I think he is not a very old ~~rather a young~~ man," she added.

"~~Married?~~ Has he a wife?"

"~~No~~ I am not aware that he has."

"Well, I hope he will be useful here. I must get to know him when I come back. It will be very convenient to have a medical man — if he is clever — in one's own parish. I get dreadfully nervous sometimes, living in such an outlandish place; & Sherton is so far to send to. No doubt you feel ~~it~~ Hintock to be a great change after watering-place life."

"I do. But it is home. It has its advantages & its disadvantages." Grace was thinking less of the solitude than of the attendant circumstances.

They chatted on for some time, Grace being not quite at her ease by her entertainer. Mrs Charmond was far too well-practised a woman not to know that to show ~~a gleam of~~ marked patronage to a sensitive girl who would probably be very quick to discern it was to demolish her dignity rather than to establish it in that young girl's eyes. ~~She knew better than many that almost the first result of education upon an individual~~

~~Of~~ ~~in Grace's position was to give her a keen perception of the foibles of the class superimposed~~ to develope So being violently possessed with her idea of making use of this ~~nice~~ gentle young girl, ready & waiting at her own door, she took great pains to win her confidence ~~at once~~ at starting.

Just before Grace's departure the two chanced to ~~left the house the two~~ passed before a mirror which reflected their faces in immediate juxtaposition, so as to bring into prominence ~~their~~ their resemblances & their contrasts. Both looked attractive as reflected ~~were~~ glassed back by the faithful reflector; ~~& them~~ but Grace's countenance ~~enlightened~~ had the effect of making Mrs Charmond ~~look~~ appear more than her full age. There are complexions which ~~do~~ set off each other to great advantage & there are those which ~~one kills~~ antagonize, the one killing for damaging its neighbour unmercifully. This was unhappily the case here. Mrs Charmond fell into a meditation, & replied abstractedly to a cursory remark of her companion's. ~~They parted~~, however, ~~at the back of the house~~ she parted from her young friend in the kindliest tones, promising to send & let her know as soon as her mind was made up on the ~~same~~ arrangement she had suggested.

When Grace had ascended nearly to the top of the adjoining slope she looked back, & saw that Mrs Charmond still ~~standing~~ stood at the door, meditatively regarding her.

Abbey —

White line

~~Chapter XXIV.~~

Often previous after his call on the Melburys, Winterborne's thoughts ran during the night, ~~Winterborne thought a good deal about Grace Mel.~~ upon Grace's announced visit to Hintock House. Why could he not have proposed to walk with her part of the way? ~~He might do so even now. And the But~~ Something told him that she might not, on such an occasion, care for his company.

He was still more of that opinion when, standing in his garden next day, he saw her go past on the journey with such a pretty pride in the event. ~~as the unassuming opposite of~~ ~~which had stimulated Grace to indulge in a ten candle illumination for the amusement of her other~~ ~~relations of the ill~~ ~~sense of being properly appreciated brighten the atmosphere of perhaps Lea~~ ~~head, & her gait & action seemed to illuminate the atmosphere around~~ ~~her, as a glow worm's lamp illuminates the grass. about~~ He saw ~~her as a vessel of emotion going to empty itself~~ on she did not know ~~what~~ ~~wherefore~~ & He wondered if her father's ambition pride, in her which had purchased for her the means of ~~doomed her with~~ intellectual light & culture far beyond those of any other native person of the village, would bring her happiness & keep it away from ~~conduct~~ the flight of her future interests, ~~carried outside~~ above and away from the local life which was once to her the movement of the world.

Nevertheless, he had her father's permission to win her if he could; & to this end it became desirable to bring matters soon to a crisis, if he ever hoped to do so. If she should think herself too good for him, he could let her go, & make the best of her loss; but until he had really tested ~~cornered~~ her he could not say that she despised

X the work even when, as at present, he contracted to do it on portions of the woodland in which he had no personal interest

his suit.
~~him~~. The question was how to quicken events towards an issue.

He thought & thought, & at last decided that as good a way as any would be to give a Christmas party, & ask Grace & her parents to come as chief guests.

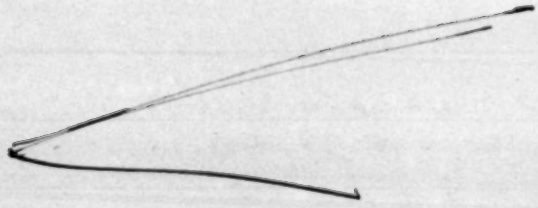
These ruminations were occupying him when there became audible a slight knocking at his front-door. He descended the path, looked out, & beheld Marty South, dressed for out-door work.

"Why did'nt you come, Mr Winterborne?" she said. "I've been waiting there hours & hours, & at last I thought I must try to find you."

"Bless my soul, I'd quite forgot," said Giles.

What he had forgotten
The fact was that there were a thousand young fir trees to be planted in a neighbouring spot which had been cleared by the woodcutters, & that he had arranged to plant them with his own hands. He had a marvellous power of making trees grow. Although he would seem to shovel in the earth quite carelessly there was a sort of sympathy between himself & the fir, oak fern or beech that he was operating on so that the roots took hold of the soil in a few days. When, on the other hand, any of the journeymen planted, although they seemed to go through an identically similar process, one quarter of the trees used die away during the ensuing August.

Hence Winterborne found a delight in transplanting the operation. Marty, who the young work turned her hand to anything, was usually the one who performed the part of keeping the trees in a perpendicular position whilst he threw in the mould.



X "How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all," said Marky.

"Do they?" said Giles. "I've never noticed it." (, & held up her finger)

She erected one of the young pines into its hole; & the soft muscled breathing instantly set in which was not to cease till the grown tree should be felled — probably long after the two planters should be felled (night or day) themselves.

"It seems to me," the girl continued, "as if they sigh because they're very sorry to begin life in earnest — just as we be."

"Just as we be?" He looked entirely at her. "You ought not to feel like that, Marky."

Her only reply was turning to take up the next tree; and

He ~~instantly~~ accompanied her towards the spot, being stimulated yet further to proceed with the work by the knowledge that the ~~ground~~ ~~going to ascend~~ ~~the orchard~~ was close to the wayside along which Grace must pass on her return from Hintock House.

"You've a cold in the head Marty", he said as they walked. "That comes of cutting off your hair."

"I suppose it does. Yes; I've three headaches going on in my head at the same time." ["Three headaches!" "Yes, a rheumatic headache in my poll, & a misery headache in the middle of my brain, & a sick headache over my eyes. However I came out, for I thought you might be wanting a grumbling like anything if I was not there."

The holes were already dug, & they set to work. Winterborne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjuror's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress, under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots towards the South-west; for, he said, in forty years time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest hold-fast on that side upon which they now stand, whether they have their power to stand against it & not fall.

They planted on through a great part of the day, almost without another word. Winterborne's mind ran on his contemplated evening-party, his abstraction being such that he hardly was conscious of Marty's presence beside him. From the nature of their employment, in which he handled the spade, & she merely held the tree, it followed that he got

But she was a heroic girl, and good exercise she got none. Though her only tolerable hand was chill as a stone, her cheeks blue, her cold worse, she would not complain whilst he was disposed to continue work. But when he paused she said, "Mr Winterborne, can I run down the lane & back to warm my feet?" awakening anew to her distance.

"Why, yes, I conse," he said. "Thought I was just thinking what a mild day it is for the season. Now I warrant that cold of yours is twice as bad as it was. You had no business to chop that hair off, Marty, it serves you almost right. Look here, cut off home at once."

"A run down the lane will be quite enough."

"No it won't. You ought not to have come out to-day at all."

"But I should like to finish the ——"

"Marty, I tell you to go home," said he peremptorily. "I can manage to keep the rest of them upright with a stick or something."

She went away without saying any more. When she had gone down the orchard a little distance she looked back. Giles suddenly went after her. "Marty, it was for your good that I was rough, you know. But warm yourself in your own way — I don't care."

When she had run off he fancied he discerned a woman's dress through the holly bushes which divided the orchard from the road. It was Grace at East Hintock, on her way back from the interview with Mrs Charmond. He threw down the tree; broke through the belt of holly, & emerged close beside her. down the tree he was planting, & was about to break through the belt of holly

when he suddenly became aware of the presence of another man, who was looking over the hedge on the opposite side of the way upon the figure of the unconscious Grace. He appeared as a handsome & gentlemanly personage of six or eight & twenty & was guzzling her through an eyeglass. Seeing that Winterborne was noticing him he let his glass drop & walked away in the opposite direction. Giles knew in a moment that this must be Mr Fitzpiers. When he was gone Winterborne pushed through the hollies, & emerged close beside the interesting object of their contemplation.

Chapter IX

"I heard ~~a star~~ the bushes move long before I saw you", she began. "I said first, it is some terrible beast; next, it is a poacher; next, it is a friend!"

but the question whether he should tell her that she had been watched. He decided in the negative.

Her regarded her (with a slight smile) weighing not her speech ["You have been to the ~~House~~ Manor", he said. "But I need not ask." The fact was, that there shone miss melbury's ~~upon~~ grace's face a species of exaltation, which saw no ~~appurtenances~~ environing ~~walls~~, nor his own occupation; ~~occupations in connection with them~~, nothing more than his bare presence. ~~He conferred being~~ ~~She was comprehended by him as one to climb down for the most~~.

"Why need you not ask?"

"Your face is like the face of Moses when he came down from the Mount." She reddened a little & said "How can you be so profane, Giles Winterborne."

"How can you think so much of that class of people!" — Well, I beg pardon — I did not mean to speak so freely. How do you like her house & her?"

"Exceedingly. I had not been inside the walls since I was a child, when it used to be let to strangers, before Mrs Charmond's late husband bought the property. She is so nice!" And Grace fell into such an abstracted gaze at the imaginary image of Mrs Charmond & her niceness that it almost conjured up a vision of that lady in mid-air before them.

"She has only been here a month or two, it seems; & cannot stay much longer, because she finds it so lonely & damp in winter. She is going abroad. Only think, Giles: she asked me to go with her."

Chapter IX

"I heard ~~a sound~~ the bushes move long before I saw you," she began. "I said first, it is some terrible beast; next, it is a poacher; next, it is a friend!"

but the question whether he should tell her that she had been watched. He decided in the negative.

He regarded her (with a slight smile) weighing not her speech [and] "You have been to the ~~Grange~~ House?" he said. "But I need not ask." The fact was that there shone from Miss Melbury's ~~upturned face~~ face a species of exaltation, which saw no ~~appliances~~ environing details, nor his own occupation; ~~occupations in connection with them~~, nothing more than his bare presence. ~~He therefore being~~ ~~She was compared but of those who to climb down from the Mount.~~

"Why need you not ask?"

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"She has only been here a month or two, it seems; & cannot stay much longer, because she finds it so lonely & damp in winter. She is going abroad. Only think, Giles: she would like me to go with her."

Giles's features stiffened a little at the news. "Indeed – what for? – But I wont keep you standing here. – Hoi, Robert!" he cried to a swaying collection of clothes in the distance, which was the figure of Creedle his man. "Go on filling in there till I come back"

"I'm a coming, sir: I'm a coming."

"Well, the reason is this," continued she as they went on together. "Mrs Charmond has a delightful side to her character – a desire to record her impressions of travel, like Alexandre Dumas, & Méry, & Sterne, & others. But she cannot find energy enough to do it herself." And Grace proceeded to explain Mrs Charmond's proposal at large. ~~"I think it an enchanting notion. Don't you?" she said.~~ "My notion is that Méry's style will suit her best (because he writes in that soft emotional impressionist way she has)," Grace said musingly.

"Indeed!" said Winterborne, with mock awe. "I suppose you talk over my head a little longer, Miss Grace Melbury." ~~"It is well enough in one sense," said Winterborne~~ "and as for myself, I hate French books. And I love dear old Hintock, & the people in it, fifty times better than all the Continent. ~~Dear~~ But the scheme – I think it an enchanting notion – Don't you Giles?"

"Oh – I did not mean it!" she said repentantly, looking into his eyes.

"It is well enough in one sense. But it will take you away," said he, mollified.

"Only for a short time. We should return in May."

"Well, Miss Melbury; it is a question for your father."

Winterborne walked with her nearly to her house. He had awaited her coming mainly with the view of mentioning to her his proposal to have a Christmas party; but homely Christmas gatherings in the venerable & jovial Hintock style seemed such primitive & uncouth beside the lofty matters of her converse & thought, that he refrained. As soon as she was gone he turned back towards the scene of his planting, & could not help saying to himself as he walked

that this engagement of his was a very unpromising business. Her outing to-day had not improved it. A woman who could go to Hintock House, ~~Lodge~~ & be friendly with ~~the~~ its mistress; ~~& talk like her~~ enter into the views of its mistress, & talk like her, and dress not much unlike her: why, she would hardly be contented with him, a yeoman, now immersed in trees, planting trees, even though he planted them well from choice. "And yet she's a true-hearted girl," he said, "I must bring matters to a point, & there's an end of it." (thinking of her words about Hintock.)

When he reached the plantation he found that Marty had come back, ~~again~~, & dismissing Creedle he went on planting silently with the girl as before.

"Suppose, Marty," he said after a while, looking at her extended arm, upon which old scratches from briars showed themselves purple in the cold wind; "Suppose you know a person, & want to bring that person to a good understanding with you; do you think a Christmas party of some sort is a warming-up thing, & likely to be useful in hastening on the matter?"

"Is there to be dancing?"

"There ought to be, certainly." "Will He dance with She?" "Well, yes."

"Then it might bring things to a head, one way or the other - I won't be the one to say which."

"It shall be done," said Winterborne, not to her, though he spoke the words quite loudly. And as he day was nearly ended he added, "Here Marty, I'll send up a man to plant the rest to-morrow. The other things to think of just now."

She did not inquire what other things; for she had seen him walking with

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Grace Melbury. She looked towards the eastern sky, which was aglow now like some vast foundry wherein new worlds were being cast. Across it the bare bough of the tree stretched horizontally, revealing every twig against the red, & showing in dark profile every beck & movement of three pheasants, that were settling themselves down on it in a row to roost observing them with the vermillion light of the sun in their pupils their eyes

"It will be fine to-morrow," said Marty, "for they are a-crouped down near at the end of the bough. "If it were going to be stormy they'd squeege close to the trunk. The weather is almost all they have to think of, is n't it, Mr Winterborne; & so they must be lighter-hearted than we."

"I daresay they are," said Winterborne.

while time

Before taking a single step in the preparations Winterborne (with no great hopes ~~decided~~ went across that evening ~~to have a chat~~ to the timber-merchants to ascertain if Grace & her parents would honour him with their presence, [Having first to set his nightly ~~traps~~ gins in the garden, to catch the rabbits that ate his winter greens. his call was after delayed till just ~~at~~ the rising of the moon, whose rays ~~lit~~ ~~the~~ ~~tops~~. reached the Hintock houses ~~village~~ but faintly as yet, on account of the trees. ~~He~~ Melbury was crossing ~~the garden~~ his yard on his way to call on some one at the larger ~~to the other end of the~~ village, but he readily turned & walked up & down the path with the young man.

Giles, in his self-deprecatory sense of living on a much smaller scale than the Melburys did, would not for the world imply that his invitation was to ~~meant~~ a gathering of any importance. So he put it in the mild form of "Can you come in for an hour when you have done business, the day after to-morrow; & Mrs & Miss Melbury, if they have nothing more pressing to do?"

~~Her~~ Melbury would give no answer at once. "No," I can't tell you to-day," he said. "I must talk it over with the women. As far as I am concerned, my dear Giles, you know I'll come with pleasure. But how do I know what Grace's notions may be? You see, she has been away amongst cultivated folks for a good while; & now this acquaintance with Mrs Charmond — well, I'll ask her". I can say no more".

When Winterborne was gone the timber-merchant went on his way. He knew very well that Grace, whatever her own feelings, would either go or not go, according as he suggested; & his instinct was, for the

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His errand took him past the church, & the way to his destination was either across the churchyard or alongside it, for some reason or other he chose the former way. ~~This path was equally near across the~~ the distances being the same.

The moon was faintly lighting up the grave-stones, & the path, & the front of the building. Suddenly Mr Melbury paused, turned in upon the grass, & approached a particular headstone, where he read "In memory of John Winterborne," with the subjoined date & age. It was the grave of Giles's father.

The timber-merchant laid his hand upon the stone, & was humanized. "Jack - my wronged friend!" he said. "I'll be faithful to my plan of making amends ~~to~~ to 'ee."

When he reached home that evening he said to Grace & Mrs Melbury, who were working at a little table by the fire: "Giles wants us to go down & spend an hour with him the ~~day~~ after to-morrow; & I'm thinking, that as 'tis Giles who asks us, we'll go."

They assented without demur; & accordingly the timber-merchant sent Giles the next morning an answer in the affirmative.

~~85~~

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White Lane ~~Chapter IX~~.

Winterborne, in his modesty, or indifference, had mentioned no particular hour in his invitation; & accordingly Mr Melbury & his family, expecting no other guests, chose their own time, which chanced to be rather early in the afternoon by reason of the ~~timber merchant's~~ somewhat quicker despatch than usual of the timber-merchant's business that day. To show their sense of the unimportance of the occasion they walked quite slowly to the house, as if they were merely out for a ramble, & going to nothing special at all; or at most intending to pay a casual call & take a cup of tea.

At this hour stirring bustle pervaded the interior of Winterborne's domicile from cellar to apple-loft. He had planned an elaborate & high tea for six o'clock or thereabouts, & the good roaring supper to come on about eleven. Being a bachelor of rather retiring habits, the whole of the preparations devolved upon himself this trusty man & familiar Robert Creedle, who did everything that required doing, from making Giles's bed to catching moles in his field. He was a survival from the days when Giles's father held the homestead, & Giles was a playing boy.

These two were now in the heat of preparation in the bakehouse, with a certain dilatoriness which appertained to both, expecting nobody before six o'clock.

Winterborne was standing before the brick oven in his shirt-sleeves, tossing in thorn-sprays, & stirring about the blazing mass with a long-handled, three-pronged, Beelzebub kind of fork, the heat shining out upon his streaming face & making his eyes like furnaces; the thorns crackling & spluttering; while Creedle, having ranged the pastry dishes

in a row on the table till the oven should be ready, was pressing out the crust of a final apple-pie with a rolling-pin. A great pot boiled on the fire; and through the open door of the back-kitchen a boy was seen seated on the fender, employing the snuffers & scouring the candlesticks, a row of the latter standing upside down on the hob to melt out the grease.

Hardy

Looking up from the rolling-pin Creedle saw passing the window first the timber-merchant, in his second-best suit, Mrs Melbury in her best silk, & Grace in the fashionable attire which, in part brought home with her from the Continent, she had worn on her visit to Mrs Charmond's. The eyes of the three had been attracted to the proceedings within by the fierce illumination which the oven threw out upon the operators & their utensils.

"Lord, Lord; if they baint come a'ready!" said Creedle.

"Hey?" said Giles, looking no— aghast round; while the boy in the background waved a reeking candlestick in his delight.

As there was no help for it Winterborne went to meet them in the doorway. ["My dear Giles — I see we have made a mistake in the time," said the timber merchant's wife, her face lengthening with concern.

"Oh — it is not much difference. I hope you'll come in."

"But this means a regular randy-voo?" said Mr Melbury accusingly, glancing round & pointing towards the beehouse with his stick.

"Well, yes," said Giles. ["And — not Great Hintock band & dancing, surely?" ["I told them there of 'em they might drop in, if they'd nothing else to do," Giles mildly admitted.

"Now, why the name didn't ye tell us 'twas going to be a serious

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before ~~this~~!
kind of thing? How should I know what folk mean if they don't say? Now, shall we come in, or shall we go home, & come back along in a couple of hours?"

"I hope you'll stay, if you'll be so good as not to mind, now you are here? I shall have it all right & tidy in a very little time. I ought not to have been so backward." Giles spoke quite angrily for one of his undemonstrative temperament; for he feared that if the Melburys once were back ~~again~~ in their own house they would not [be disposed to] turn out again.

["'Tis we ought not to have been so forward; that's what 'tis," said Mr Melbury testily. "Don't keep us here in the sitting-room: lead on to the bake-house, man. Now we are here we'll help ye get ready for the rest. Here, mis'ess — take off your things, & help him out in his baking, or he won't get done to-night. I'll finish heating the oven, & let you free to go & skiver up them ducks." His eye had passed with pitiless directness of criticism into yet remoter recesses of Winter. [awkwardly built] homes/premises, where the aforesaid birds were hanging.

"And I'll help finish the tarts," said Grace cheerfully.

"I don't know about that," said her father. "'Tis not quite so much in your line as it is in your mother-law's & mine.

"Of course I could n't let you, Grace!" said Giles, with some distress.

"I'll do it, of course," said Mrs Melbury, taking off her silk train, hanging it up to a nail, carefully rolling back her sleeves, pinning them

~~Pg~~

& her shoulders, & stripping Giles of his apron for her own use.

So Grace pottered idly about while her father & his wife helped on the preparations. A kindly pity of his household management, which Winterborne saw in her eyes when ever he caught them ~~he looked that way~~, depressed him much more than her contempt would have done.

Creedle, ~~nodding~~ met Giles at the pump after a while, when each of the others ~~was~~ absorbed in the difficulties of a cuisine based on utensils, cupboards, & provisions that were strange to them. He groaned to his young man in a whisper, "This is a bruckle bet, maister, I'm much afeard! Who'd ha' thought they'd have come so soon?"

The bitter placidity of Winterborne's ~~somewhat bloody~~ bitter look adumbrated the misgivings he did not care to express. "Have you got the celery ~~salad~~ ready?" he asked quickly.

"Now that's a thing I never could mind: no, not if you'd pay me in silver & gold!" I says that And I don't care who the man is, a stick of celery that is n't scrubbed with the scrubbing-brush, is not clean".

"Very well – I'll attend to it. You go & get 'em comfortable indoors."

(very well)

He hastened to the garden, & soon returned, tossing the stalks to Creedle who was still in a tragic mood. "If ye'd ha' married, d'ye see, maister", he said, "this caddle could n't have happened to us!"

Everything being at last under way, the oven set, & all done that could minne the supper ~~being~~ turning up ready at ~~the proper time~~ some time or other, Giles & his friends entered the parlour, where the mellerings again dropped into position as guests. Others now arrived, & tea went off very well.

(among them ~~Mr~~ Dr Farmer Bawtree & the hollow-turner,

Though the room was not nearly so warm & cheerful as the blazing bakehouse.

Grace's disposition to make the best of everything, & to wink at deficiencies in Winterbourne ~~housekeeping~~ ménage, was so uniform & persistent that he suspected her of seeing even more deficiencies than he was aware of. That suppressed sympathy which had showed in her face ever since her arrival told him as much ~~& that~~ too plainly.

"This muddling style of housekeeping is what you've not lately been used to, I suppose?" he said when they were a little apart.

"No; but- I like it; it reminds me so pleasantly that everything here in dear old Hintock is just as it used to be.....the oil is - not quite nice; but- everything else is."

"The oil?"

"On the chairs, I mean; because it gets on one's dress. Still, mine is not a new one."

Giles formed that Creedle, in his zeal to make things look bright, had smeared the chairs with some greasy kind of furniture-polish & ~~not~~ refrained from rubbing it dry, in order not to diminish the mirror-like effect ~~and thereby be lowered~~, that the mixture possessed produced as laid on. Giles apologized & called Creedle; but he felt that the fates were against him.

Chapter X.- Supper-time came, & with it the hot-baked from the oven, laid on a snowy cloth ~~that was~~ fresh from the press, & reticulated with folds as in Flemish Last-Suppers. Creedle & the boy fetched & carried with amazing alacrity; the latter, to mollify his superior, & make things pleasant, expressing his admiration of Creedle's cleverness when they were alone.

"I s'pose the time when you learnt all these knowing things, Mr Creedle, was when you was in the militia?"

"Well, yes. I seed the world at that time somewhat, certainly, & many the strange dashing ways of life. ~~a good deal~~. Not but that Giles has worked hard in helping me to bring things to such perfection, to-day. that's true. 'Giles', says I, mostly he's maister. Not that I should call'n maister by rights, for his father & I growed up side by side with me, as if one mother had twinned us & been our ~~under my eye as if he had been my own~~ nourishing."

"I s'pose your memory can reach a long way back into history, Mr Creedle?"

Ancient days, when there was battles, & famines, & hang-fairs, & other pomps, seem to me as yesterday.

"Oh yes.... Ah, many's the patriarch I've seed come & go in this parish! — There, he's calling for more plates. Lord, why can't 'em turn their plates bottom upwards for pudding, as they used to do in former days!"

Meanwhile in the adjoining room Giles was presiding in a half unconscious state. He could not get over the initial failures in his scheme for advancing his suit; & hence he did not know that he was eating mouthfuls of bread & nothing else, & continually snuffing the two candles next him till he had reduced them to mere glimmers drowned in their own grease. Creedle now appeared with a specially prepared dish, which he served by elevating the little three-legged pot that contained it, & tilting the contents into a dish, exclaiming simultaneously, "Draw back, gentlemen & ladies, please!"

A ~~slight~~ splash followed. Grace gave a quick involuntary nod & blink

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& put her handkerchief to her face.

"Good heavens, what did you do that for, Creedle!" said Giles sternly, & jumping up. ~~top.~~ "'Tis how I do it when they haint here, maister", mildly expostulated Creedle, in an aside audible to all the company.

"Well yes – but –" replied Giles. ~~utterly Confused~~. He went over to Grace, & hoped none of it had gone into her eye.

"Oh no", she said. "Only a sprinkle on my face. It was nothing."

"Kiss it & make it well", gallantly shewed Mr Bawtree. ~~this~~ ~~was foolish~~. Miss Melbury blushed.

The timber-merchant said quickly "Oh, it is nothing! She must bear these little mishaps." But there could be discerned in his face something which said "I ought to have foreseen this!"

Giles himself, since the untoward beginning of the feast, had not quite liked to see Grace present. He wished he had not asked He had done it, in dearth of other friends, that the room might not appear empty. such people as Bawtree & the hollow-turner. In his mind's eye, before the event, they had been the mere background or padding of the scene; but somehow in the reality they were the most prominent personages there.

After supper they played cards, Bawtree & the hollow-turner moodily poring the new packs for an interminable game in which a lump of chalk was incessantly used – a game to which those two always played wherever they were, taking a solitary candle & going to a private table in a corner, with the mien of persons bent on weighty matters. The rest of the company

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on this account
were obliged to put up with old packs for their round game, that had
been ~~to store~~ lying by in a drawer ever since the time that Giles's grand-
mother was alive. Each
card had a great stain in the middle of its back, produced by the touch of
generations of damp & excited thumbs, & the kings & queens wore a decayed expression
of features as if they were rather an impecunious dethroned race of
monarchs hiding in obscure slums
players, than real regal characters. Every now & then the comparatively few remarks of the players at the round game were harshly intruded on by the measured jingle of Farmer Bawtree & the hollow-turner from the back of the room: these

"And I' will hold' a wa-ger with you'
That all these marks' are thirt'-y two!"

accompanied by rapping strokes with the chalk on the table;
Then an ~~e~~ exclamation, an argument, ~~a rachat on the table; the rhymes~~
a dealing of the cards; then the commencement
of the rhymes anew.

(by talking with a satisfied sense of weight in his words, &
The timber-merchant showed his feelings by praising the party in a
patronizing tone, when Winterborne expressed his fear that he/his were not
enjoying themselves.

"O yes, yes: pretty much.... What handsome glasses those are, ~~Giles~~. I
did'nt know you had such glasses in the house. Now Lucy [to his wife]
you ought to get some like them for ourselves." And when they had
abandoned cards, & Winterborne was ~~standing~~ talking to Melbury by
the fire, it was the timber-merchant who stood with his back to the mantel
in a proprietary attitude; from which post of vantage he critically regarded
~~observed~~ ~~he looked at~~ Giles's person, rather

~~Of~~

as a superficies than as a solid with ~~fancies~~ ideas & feelings inside it; saying, "What a splendid coat that one is your beau on, Giles. I can't get such coats. You dress better than I."

After supper there was a dance, the handsman from Great Hintock ~~had~~ having been away from home so long that she had forgotten the old figures, & hence having arrived some time before. Grace did not join in the ~~figures of~~ movement. Then Giles felt that all was over. As for her, she was thinking. ~~She thought~~ as she watched the gyrations, of a very different measure that she had been accustomed to tread with a bevy of ~~light~~ sylph-like creatures in muslin, in the music-room of a large house, most of whom were now moving in ~~far higher scenes than~~ widely different scenery from this, both as regards place, & character.

A woman she did not know came & offered to tell her fortune with the abandoned cards. Grace assented to the proposal, & the woman told her tale — unskilfully — for want of practice, as she declared.

Mr Melbury was standing by, & exclaimed contemptuously "Tell her fortune, indeed! Her fortune has been told by men of science — what do you call 'em — phrenologists. You can't teach her anything new. She's been too far among the wise ones to be astonished at anything she can hear among we us folks in Hintock."

At last the time came for breaking up, Melbury & his family being the earliest to leave, the ~~two~~ two card players still pursuing their game doggedly in the corner. They ~~two~~ three walked home, the distance being short & the night clear. "Well, Giles is a very good fellow," said Mr Melbury, as they struck down the lane under ~~the~~ boughs which formed a black filigree

they completely and Giles's game with the ~~ches~~

in which the stars seemed set.

"Certainly he is," said Grace quickly, and in such a tone as to show that he stood no lower, if no higher, in her regard than he had stood before.

When they were opposite the doctor's an opening through which, by day, the doctor's house could be seen, they observed a light in one of his rooms, although it was now about two o'clock.

"Hard study, no doubt," said her husband.

"The doctor is not asked yet," said Mrs Mellbury [One would think that, as he seems to have nothing to do about here by day, he could at least afford to go to bed at night early]. "'Tis astonishing how little we see of him."

Mellbury's mind seemed to him in much relief to the contemplation of Mrs Fitzpiers after the scenes of the evening. "It is natural enough," he replied. "What can a man of that sort find to interest him in Hintock? I don't expect he'll stay here long."

His mind reverted to the Giles's party, and when they were nearly home he spoke again, his daughter being a few steps in advance: "It is hardly the line of life for a girl like Grace, after what she's been accustomed to. I didn't foresee that, in sending her to boarding-school, & letting her learn, & what-not, to make her a good bargain for Giles, I should be really spoiling her for him. Ah — 'tis a thousand pities! But he ought to have her — he ought!"

At this moment the two exclusive, chalk-mark men, having at last really finished their play, could be heard coming along in the rear, vociferously singing a song to march-time, & keeping vigorous step to the same in far-reaching strides: —

"She may go, oh!
She may go, oh!
She may go to the d — for me!" } [substituted for may. put"]

The Timber-merchant turned indignantly to Mrs Melling. "That's the sort of ~~company~~ society we've been asked to meet", he said. "For us old folk it did'nt matter; but for Grace-Giles should have known better!"

white line

~~Chapter X.~~

Meanwhile, in the empty house from which the guests had just cleared out the subject of their discourse was walking from room to room surveying the general displacement of furniture with no esthetic feeling; rather the reverse, indeed. At last he entered the ~~back-kitchen~~ bakehouse, & found there Robert-Creeble sitting over the embers, also lost in contemplation. Winterborne sat down beside him.

"Well, Robert; you must be tired. You'd better get on to bed."

"Ay, ay, Giles — what do I call ye — maister, I would say. But 'tis well to think the day is done, when 'tis done."

Winterborne had absentedly taken the poker, & with a wrinkled forehead was ploughing abroad the wood-embers on the broad hearth, till it was like a vast scorching ~~Lanka~~ Sahara, with red-hot boulders lying about everywhere. "Do you think it went off well, Creeble?" he asked.

⁂ while that egg-flip would ha' passed through muslin, so little curdled 'twere.

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"The victuals did; that I know. And the drink did; that I steadfastly believe, from the hollow sound of the barrels. Good honest drink 'twere. I the headiest mead I ever brewed; and the best wine ~~berries~~ that ~~grape~~ berries could rise to; & the ~~best~~ briskest Horner & Cleeves cider, leaving out the spice & spirits I put into it." "I was good enough to make any ~~king's~~ king's ever wrung down, heart merry ~~laugh~~ — ay, to make his whole carcase smile." — Still, I'm afeard some things didn't go well with He & his." Creedle nodded in a direction which signified where the Melburys lived.

"I'm afraid too that it was a failure there!"

"If so, 'twere doomed to be so. ~~Thumb~~ Not but what that ~~snail~~ snail might as well have come upon anybody else's plate as hers."

"What snail?"

"Well maister, there was a little one upon the edge of her plate when I brought it out; & so it must have been in her few leaves of winter-green."

"How the deuce did a snail get there?"

"That I don't know no more than the dead; but there my gentleman was."

"But Robert, of all places, that was where he shouldn't have been!"

~~How was it?~~

"Well 'twas his native home, come to that; & where else could we expect him to be? I don't care who the man is, snails & caterpillars always will lurk in close to the stump of ~~cole~~ cabbages in that tantalizing way.

"He was it alive I suppose?" said Giles with a shudder on Grace's account.

"Oh no. He was well boiled – I warrant him well boiled. God forbid that a live snail should be seed on any plate of victuals that's served by Robert Creedle..... But Lord, there; I don't mind 'em myself – them small ones; for they were born on cabbage, & they're reared on cabbage; so they must be made of cabbage. But she, the close-mouthed little lady, she did n't say a word about it; though she should have made good small conversation as to the nater of such creatures; especially as wit ran short among us sometimes."

"Oh yes – 'tis all over!" murmured Giles to himself, shaking his head over the glooming plain of embers, & lining his forehead more than ever. "Do you know, Robert," he said, "that she's been accustomed to servants everything superfine these many years? How then, could she stand our ways?" Then that she ought to hob-&-nob elsewhere.

"Well, all I can say is, they should n't have schooled her so monstrous high, or else bachelor-men should n't give randys, or if they do give 'em, only to their own race."

"Perhaps that's true," said Winterborne, rising & yawning a sigh.

Chapter XI.

'Tis a pity – a thousand pities!" her father kept saying next morning at breakfast, Grace being still in her bedroom.

But how could he, with any self respect, obstruct Winterborne's suit at this stage, & nullify a scheme he had laboured to promote – was, indeed, mechanically promoting at this moment? A crisis was ap-

~~79~~

he met.

preaching, mainly as a result of his contrivances; & it would have to

But here was the fact, which could not be disguised: since

seeing what an immense change her last ~~year~~ twelvemonths of absence had pro-

duced in his daughter, after ~~he~~ ~~hundred~~ a year ~~she~~ had been ~~spending~~ heavy sum ~~large sums~~ per annum that spending for

several years upon her education, he was reluctant to let her marry

occupied as woodsman ~~farmer~~, cider-merchant, ~~& what not~~, apple-farmer, & what-not,

Giles Winterborne, ~~even now she willing to marry him merely~~.

"She will be his wife, if you don't upset her notion that she's bound

to ~~act~~ accept him as an understood thing," said ~~her step~~ Mrs Melbury. "Bless ye, she'll soon shake

down here in Hintock & be content with ~~Hintock ways of life~~ Giles's

way of living, which he'll improve with what money she'll have from you.

'Tis the strangeness after her genteel life that makes her feel in-

comfortable at first. Why, when I saw Hintock ~~as you have~~ the first time

I thought I never could like it. But things gradually get familiar, & ~~the~~

stone floors seem not so very cold & hard, & ~~smell~~ the hooting of owls not so very dreadful,

& ~~no fearsome~~ loneliness not so very lonely, after a while."

"Yes – I believe ye. That's just it. I know Grace will gradually

sink down to our level again, & catch our manners & way of speaking,

& ~~grow~~ feel a drowsy & content ~~to be~~ in being Giles's wife. But I can't bear the

thought of dropping down to that old level as promising a piece of mai-

denhood as ever lived – fit to ornament a palace wi', that I've

taken so much trouble to lift up. Fancy her white hands getting redder

every day, her tongue losing its pretty up-country curl in talking,

~~[illegible]~~ bounding) shail &
& her walk becoming ~~[illegible]~~ the regular Hintock wamble."
"She may shail; but she'll never wamble," replied his wife decisively.
When ~~she~~ Grace came downstairs he complained of her lying in bed so late:
not so much moved by a particular objection to that form of indulgence
as discomposed by these other reflections.

The corners of her pretty mouth dropped a little down. "You used to
complain with justice when I was a girl," she said. "But I am a woman
now, & can judge for myself. ....But it is not that: it is something else!"
Instead of sitting down she went out-
side the door.

He was sorry. The petulance that relatives show towards each other is
in truth directed against that intangible Causality Eventuality which has shaped the
situation no less for the offenders than the offended, but is too elusive to be
discerned ~~caught~~ & cornered by poor humanity. Melbury in irritated mood. followed her. She had ram-
bled on to the paddock, where the white frost lay, & where starlings in flocks of
twenties & thirties were walking about, watched by a comfortable family
of sparrows perched in a line along the string-course of the chimney, ~~where they~~ preening
themselves in the
rays of the sun.

"Come in to breakfast, my girl," he said. "And as to Giles, use your
own mind. Whatever pleases you will please me."

"I am promised to him, father; & I cannot help thinking that in honour
I ought to marry him, whenever I do marry."

He had a strong suspicion that somewhere in the bottom of her heart
there pulsed an old simple indigenous feeling favourable to Giles, though it had become overlaid

with implanted tastes. But he would not distinctly express his views on the promise. "Very well", he said. "But I hope I shan't lose you yet. Come in to breakfast. — What did you think of the inside of ~~the lodge~~ Hintock House the other day?

"I liked it much".

"Different from friend Winterborne's."

She said nothing; but he who knew her was aware that she meant by her silence to reproach him with drawing cruel comparisons.

"Mrs Charmond has asked you to come again — when, did you say?"

"She thought Tuesday; but would send the day before to let me know if it suited her." And with this subject upon their lips they entered to breakfast.

Tuesday came; but no message from Mrs Charmond. Nor was there any on Wednesday. In brief, a fortnight slipped by without a sign; & it looked suspiciously as if Mrs Charmond was not going further in the direction of "taking up" Grace at present.

Her father reasoned thereon. Immediately after his daughter's two indubitable successes with Mrs Charmond, the interview in the wood, & the visit to the House, she had attended Winterborne's party. No doubt the out-&-out joviality of that gathering had made it a topic in the neighbourhood, & that everyone present as guests had been widely spoken of — Grace, with her exceptional qualities, above all. What then so natural as that Mrs Charmond should have heard the village news, & become quite disappointed in her expectations of Grace at finding she kept such company?

Full of this post hoc argument Mr Melbury overlooked the infinite throng of other possible reasons & unreasons for a woman's changing her mind. For instance, while knowing that his Grace was attractive, he quite forgot that Mrs Charmond had also great pretensions to beauty. In his simple estimate ~~of~~ an attractive woman attracted all around.

So it was settled in his mind that her sudden mingling with the villagers at the unlucky Winterborne's was the cause of her most grievous loss, as he deemed it, in the direction of Hintock House.

"'Tis a thousand pities!" he would repeat to himself. "I am ruining her for conscience-sake!"

It was one morning later on, that ~~Curiously enough~~, while these things were agitating his mind, ~~& before breakfast~~ curiously enough, just as they finished breakfast. ~~the meal was finished~~, something darkened the window, & Looking up they saw Giles in person, mounted on horseback, & stooping his neck forward, as he had been doing for some time, to catch their attention through the window. Grace had been the first to see him, & involuntarily exclaimed, "There he is ~~Mr~~ Ed. And a new horse!"

On their faces as they regarded ~~him~~ Giles, their ~~the~~ suspended thoughts & compound feelings concerning him, could he have read them through those old panes. But he saw nothing: his features just now were, for a wonder, lit up with a red smile (at some other idea). So they rose from breakfast & went to the door, Grace with an anxious wistful manner, her father in a reverie, Mrs Melbury placid & enquiring. "We have come out to look at your horse", she said.

It could be seen that
(He was pleased at their attention, & explained that he had ridden a mile or two to try the animal's paces "I bought her," he added, with warmth so severely repressed as to seem indifference, ~~repressed warmth~~, because she has been used to carry a lady."

Still Mr Melbury did not brighten. Mrs Melbury said, "And is she quiet?" Winterborne assured her that there was no doubt of it. "I took care of that. She's five-&-twenty, & very clever for her age."

"Well, get off and come in," said Melbury brusquely; & Giles dismounted accordingly.

This event was the concrete result of Winterborne's thoughts during the past week or two. The want of success with his evening-party he had accepted ~~at last with~~ in as philosophic a mood as he was capable of; but there had been enthusiasm enough left in him one day at Sherton-Abbas market to purchase this old mare, which had been ridden by a neighbouring parson for many years, & offered him to carry either a gentleman or a lady, & to do odd jobs of carting & agriculture at a pinch. This obliging ~~The~~ ~~easier~~ ~~fastest~~ quadruped seemed, to punish Giles with a means of re-instating himself in Melbury's good opinion as a man of ~~practical~~ considerateness by throwing out future possibilities to Grace.

The latter looked at him with intensified ~~considerable~~ interest this morning, in the mood which is altogether peculiar to woman's nature, & which, when reduced into plain words, seems as impossible as the penetrability of matter; that of entertaining a tender pity for the object of her own unnecessary coldness. The imperturbable poise which marked Winterborne in general was enlivened now by a freshness & animation that ~~which~~

set a brightness in his eye & on his cheek. Mrs Melbury asked him to have some breakfast; & he pleasurably replied that he would join them, with pleasure; not perceiving with his usual lack of tactical observation, that they had all finished their meal, that the hour was inconveniently late, & that the note piped by the kettle denoted it to be nearly empty; so that fresh water had to be brought in, & trouble taken to make it boil, & a general renovation of the table carried out. Neither did he know, of the household movements thereby. So full was he of his tender ulterior object in buying that horse, how many cups of tea he was gulping down one after another, nor how the morning was slipping, nor how he was keeping the family from dispersing about their duties.

Then he told them without the humorous story of the horse's purchase, looking particularly grim at some fixed object in the room, a way he always looked when he narrated anything that amused him. While he was still thinking of the scene he had described, Grace rose & said, "I have to go & help my mother now, Mr Winterborne."

"H'm?" he ejaculated, turning his eyes suddenly upon her.

She repeated her words with a slight blush of awkwardness; whereupon Giles becoming suddenly conscious, too conscious, jumped up saying, "To be sure, to be sure!" & wished them quickly Good-morning, & bolted out of the house.

Nevertheless he had upon the whole strengthened his position, with her at least. Time, too, was on his side, for (as her father saw with some regret) already the

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homeliness of Hintock ~~in general, and Giles in particular~~ life of was fast becoming effaced from her observation as a singularity; just as the first ~~as the~~ strangeness of a face from which we have for years been separated insensibly ~~tones~~ passes off with renewed intercourse, & ~~it tones itself~~ ~~the features tone themselves~~ ~~commence to take their~~ down into simple identity with ~~those of the~~ the lineaments of the past.

Thus Mr Melbury went out of the house still unreconciled to the sacrifice of the gem he had been at such pains in mounting. He fain could hope, in the secret nether chamber of his mind, that something would happen before the balance of her feeling had quite turned in Winterborne's favour, to rehang his conscience upreserve her on her elevated plane.

He could not forget that Mrs Charmond had apparently abandoned all interest in his daughter Grace, as suddenly as she had conceived it, ~~taken her up~~, & was as firmly convinced as ever that ~~her domestiary friendliness~~ the comradeship ~~equality~~ which Grace had shown with Giles & his crew by attending ~~his~~ party had been the cause.

Matters hinged on thus. And then, as a hoop by a gentle ~~touches~~ knocks on this side & on that is made to travel in specific directions, ~~dissociated from the lines of its starting point~~ the little touches of circumstance ~~events~~ in the life of this ~~father daughter~~ young girl shaped the curves of her career.

Chapter XII.

It was a day of rather bright weather for the season. Miss Melbury went out for a morning walk, & her ever regardful father, having an hour's leisure, offered to walk with her. The breeze was fresh, and quite ~~cold~~

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steady, filtering ~~steaming~~ itself
powerfully ~~blowing~~, through the denuded ~~malacumbead~~ mass of twigs without
swaying them, but making the point of each ivy-leaf on the trunks
restlessly
~~restlessly~~ scratch its underlying neighbour. Grace lips sucked in this rarefied air
of hers like milk. They soon reached a place where the wood ran
down into a corner, and went towards ~~being benches~~ outside it ~~on~~ comparatively
open ground. ~~They~~ Having looked round about they were intending
to re-enter the copse when a fox quietly emerged with a dragging brush.
trotted past them ~~with a lowered brush~~ tamely as a domestic
~~a low tail, like a tame~~ cat, & disappeared amid some dead fern.
They walked on, her father nearly observing after ~~watching~~ ..... he animel
"They are hunting somewhere near."

Further up they saw in the mid-distance the hounds running
hither & thither; as if there were little or no scent that day. ~~the scent must have been feeble, & they seemed to have lost it had lost their victim~~. Soon divers members of the hunt
appeared on the scene, & it was evident from their movements that the
chase had been stultified by general puzzle-headedness as to the
whereabouts of the intended victim. In a minute a farmer rode
to the two pedestrians,
up ~~&~~ panting with Actæonic excitement, & Grace being a few steps or two in
advance he addressed her, asking if she had seen the fox.

"Yes," said she ~~promptly~~. "We saw him some time ago – just out there."
"Did you cry Halloo?" ["We said nothing."
"Then why the d— didn't you, ~~cry Halloo~~, or get the old buffer to
do it for you!" said the man as he cantered away.

She looked rather disconcerted at this reply, and ~~& the man rode away~~. Ob.

~~[illegible]~~

serving her father's face ~~she~~ saw that it was quite red.

"He ought not to have spoken to ye like that!" said the old man in the tone of one whose heart was bruised, (it was though not by the epithet applied to himself.) "and he wouldn't if he had been a gentleman. I was not the language to use to a ~~gentleman~~ woman of any meeness. You so well read & cultivated — how could he expect ye to know what tom-boy field-folk are in the habit of doing? If so be you had just come from trimming Swedes (or mangolds) — joking with the rough ~~creatures~~ workfolk & all that — ~~you~~ I could have stood it. But ~~I know that~~ a flower reared under glass can't bear hard weather. (But has it cost me near a hundred a year to lift ~~ye~~ you out of all that, so as to show an example to the neighbourhood of what a woman can be? — Grace, shall I tell you the secret of it? 'I was because I was in your company. If a black-coated ~~gentleman~~ squire or parson had been walking with you instead of me he wouldn't have spoken so."

"~~No~~ no, father; there's nothing in you rough or ill-~~shaped~~ mannered!" —

"I tell you it is that! I've noticed, & I've noticed it many times, that a woman takes her colour from the man she's walking with. The woman who looks an unquestionable Lady when she's with a polished-up fellow looks a mere tawdry imitation article when she's hobbing & nobbing with a homely blade..... You shan't be treated like that for long, or at least your children shan't. You shall have somebody to walk with you who looks more of a dandy than I — please God you shall!"

"But my dear father," she said much distressed, "I don't mind it at all. I don't wish for more honour than I already have!"

~~108~~

"a perplexing
"~~An embarrassing~~ & ticklish possession is a daughter," according to ~~some~~ Menander, ~~probably~~ some old Greek poet; & to nobody was one ever more so than to Melbury, by reason of her very dearness to him. As for Grace, she ~~too~~ began to feel troubled; she did not perhaps wish, there & then, unambitiously to devote her life to Giles Winterborne; but she was conscious of more & more uneasiness at the possibility of being the social hope of the family.

"You would like to have more honour, if it pleases me?" asked her father, in continuation of the subject.

Despite her feeling she assented to this. His reasoning had not been without its weight upon her.

"Grace," he said, just before they had reached the house; "if it costs me my life you shall marry well! To-day has shown me that whatever a young woman's ~~quality~~ niceness, she stands as for nothing alone. You shall marry well."

He ~~half sighed~~, breathed heavily, & his breathing was caught up by the breeze, which seemed to sigh a soft remonstrance.

She looked calmly at him. "And how about Mr Winterborne?" she asked. "I mention it, father, not as a matter of sentiment, but as a question of keeping faith."

The timber merchant's eyes fell for a moment. "I don't know – I don't know," he said. "'Tis a trying strait. Well, well; there's ~~not~~ no hurry. We'll wait & see how he gets on."

~~While time~~

That evening he called her into his room, a snug little apartment

behind the large parlour. It had at one time been part of the bakehouse, with the ordinary oval brick oven in the wall; but Mr Melbury had built in turning it into an office (an iron safe into the cavity), which he used for holding his private papers. The door of the safe was now open, the keys were hanging from it.

"Sit down Grace, & keep me company," he said. "You may amuse yourself by looking over there." He threw out a heap of papers before her.

"What are they?" she asked.

"Securities of various sorts." He unfolded them one by one. "Papers worth so much money each. "Now here's a lot of Turnpike-bonds, for one thing. Would you think that each of these pieces of paper is worth two hundred pounds?"

"No indeed, if you didn't say so."

"Tis so then. Now here are papers of another sort. They are for different sums in the Three-per-cents. Now these are Port-Breedy Harbour bonds — we have a great stake in that harbour, you know, because I send off timber there. Open the rest at your pleasure. They'll interest ye."

"Yes, I will — some day," said she rising.

"Nonsense - open them now. You ought to learn a little of such matters. A young lady of education should not be ignorant of money affairs altogether. Suppose you should be left a widow some day, with your husband's title-deeds & investments thrown upon your hands —"

Don't say that, father. Title-deeds — it sounds so vain!

It does not. Grace come to that I have title-deeds myself. There - that

piece of parchment represents ~~some~~ houses in Sherton-Abbas."

"Yes; but—" She hesitated, & looked at the fire "—if what has been arranged about me should come to anything," (and she went on in a low voice:) "my sphere will be quite a middling one."

"Your sphere ought not to be ~~humble~~ middling!" he exclaimed—not in passion but in earnest conviction. "You said you never felt more at home, more in your element, anywhere than you did that afternoon with Mrs Charnwood, when she showed you ~~over~~ her house, & all her nick-nacks, & made you stay to tea so nicely in her drawing-room—surely you did!"

"Yes, I did say so," ~~she~~ admitted Lyace.

"Was it true?"

"Yes—I felt so at the time. The feeling is less strong now, perhaps."

"~~That's~~ Ah! Now, though you don't see it, your feeling at the time was the right one, because your mind & body were just in ~~fresh~~ full of fresh cultivation, so that going there with her was like meeting like. ~~And~~ Since then you've been living with us, & have ~~grown~~ fallen back a little, & so you don't feel your place so strongly. Now do as I tell ye, & look over these papers, & see what you'll be worth some day. For they'll all be yours, you know: who have I got to leave 'em to but you? Perhaps when your education is backed up by what these papers represent, & that backed up by another such a set & their owner, men such as that fellow was this morning may think you a little more than a buffer's girl."

##

So she did as commanded, & opened each of the folded representatives of hard cash that her father put before her. To make her sow in her heart cravings for social position was obviously his shiny desire, though in direct antagonism to a better feeling which had hitherto prevailed with him, & had, indeed, only succumbed that morning during the ramble.

She wished that she was not his worldly hope; the responsibility of such a position was too great. She had made it for herself mainly by her appearance & attractive behaviour to him since her return. "If I had only come home in a shabby dress, & tried to speak roughly, this might not have happened", she thought. She deplored less the fact, than the sad possibilities that might be hidden therein.

Her father then insisted upon her looking over his cheque-book, & reading the counterfoils. This also she obediently did; & at last came to two or three which had been drawn to defray some of the late expenses of her clothes, board, & education.

"I, too, cost a good deal, like the horses & weapons & corn, she said sorrily looking up sorrily.

"I did'nt want you to look at those – I merely meant to give you an idea of my investment transactions. But if you do cost as much as they, never mind. You'll yield a better return".

"Don't think of me like that!" she begged. "A mere chattel."

"a what? Oh, a dictionary word. Well as that's in your line I don't

forbid it, even if it tells against me", he said good-humouredly. And he looked her proudly up & down.

A few minutes later Gammer Oliver came to tell them that supper was ready, & in giving the information she added incidentally, "So we shall soon lose the mistress of Hintock House for some time, I hear, Master Melbury. Yes, she's going off to foreign parts to-morrow, for the rest of the winter months; & be chok'd if I don't wish I could do the same, for my wynd-pipe is quite furred like any flue".

When the old woman had left the room Melbury turned to his daughter & said; "So Grace, you've lost your new friend; & your chance of keeping her company, & writing her travels, is quite gone from ye!

Grace said nothing.

"Now", he went on emphatically, "as Winterborne's affair has done this, so let me say one word. Promise me that you will not meet him again without my knowledge".

O yes 'tis;

"I never do meet him, father, either without your knowledge or with it."

"So much the better. I don't like the look of this at all. And I say it not out of harshness to him, poor fellow, but out of tenderness to you. For how could a woman brought up delicately as you have been bear the roughness of a life with him?"

She sighed; it was a sigh of sympathy with Giles, complicated by a sense of the intractibility of circumstances.

White line (121) Hardy

At that same hour, & almost at that same minute, there was a conversation about Winterbourne in progress in the village street, opposite Mr Melbury's gates, where Timothy Tangs the elder, & Robert Creedle, had accidentally met. The sawyer was asking Creedle if he had heard what was all over the parish, the skin of his face being drawn two ways on the matter — towards brightness in respect of it as news, & towards concern in respect of it as circumstance. "Why that poor little lonesome thing Marty South is likely to lose her father. He was almost well, but is much worse again; a man all skin & grief he ever were; & if he leave Little Hintock for a better land, wont it make some difference to your maister Winterbourne, neighbour Creedle?" "Can I be a prophet in Israel? Wont it!" said Creedle. "I was only shaping off such a thing yesterday in my poor long-seeing way, & all the work of the house upon my one shoulders! You know what it means? It is upon John South's life that all Mr Winterbourne's houses hang. If so be he so make his decease, thereupon the Law is that the houses South die fall without the least chance of absolution into her hands at the House. I told him so) ~~Giles's father when he spent money on'em that twas a bad plan to enlarge & improve on life leases if your own life was not in 'em;~~ but the words of the faithful be only as wind!" ~~he improved the property & did fairly well by them for some years, & so has his son. But as that comes, Timothy, poor House; & it seems coming true; & his son will suffer! & all the work of the house on my one shoulders! & lose all her property! — that's bad!" "Yes" Ah — the words of the faithful be as wind!"

Chapter XIII.

The news was true. The Life — the one frajile life — that had been used as a measuring-tape of time by law, was in danger of being frayed

away. It was the last of a ~~[illegible]~~ group of lives which had served this purpose, at the end of whose ~~term~~ breathings ~~Winterborne's~~ the small homestead occupied by ~~Winterborne~~ South himself, the larger one that of Giles Winterborne, & half-a-dozen others that had been in the possession of various Hintock village families for the last previous hundred years, & were now Winterborne's, would fall in the course part of the encompassing estate.

Yet a short two-months earlier Marty's father, aged fifty-five years, though something of a fidgety anxious being, would have been looked on as a man whose existence was as far removed from hazardous as any in the parish, & as bidding fair to be prolonged for another quarter of a century.

Winterborne walked up & down his garden next day thinking of the contingency. The sense that the ~~dwelling~~ paths he paced was pacing, the cabbage-plots, the appletrees, his ~~house~~ dwelling, cider-cellar, wring-house, stables, ~~garden~~ & weather-cock were all garden-paths, slipping away (beneath his feet & over his head) as if they were painted on a magic-lantern slide, was curious. In spite of John South's late indisposition he had not anticipated danger. To inquire concerning his health had been to show less sympathy than to remain silent, considering the material interest he possessed in the household's life, & he had accordingly made a point of avoiding Marty's house.

Whilst he was here in the garden somebody came to fetch him. It was Marty herself, & she showed her distress by her unconsciousness of a crooked poll.

"Father is still so much troubled in his mind about that tree," she said. "You know the tree I mean, Mr Winterborne; the tall one in front of the house that he thinks will blow down & kill us. Can you come, & see if you can

persuade him out of his ~~delusion~~ notion? I can do nothing."

He accompanied her to the cottage, & she conducted him upstairs. John South was pillowed up in a chair between the bed & the window, exactly opposite the latter, towards which his face was turned.

"Ah, neighbour Winterborne," he said. "I wouldn't have minded if my life had only been my own to lose; I don't valle it in much of itself, & can let it go if Lad's 'tis required of me. But to think what 'tis worth to you, a young man rising in life, that do trouble me! It seems a trick of dishonesty towards ye to go off at fifty-five! & I could bear up, I know I could, if it were not for the tree — yes, the tree 'tis that's killing me. There he stands, threatening my life every minute that the wind do blow. He'll come down upon us, & squat us dead; & what will ye do when the life on your property is taken away!"

"Never you mind me — that's of no consequence," said Giles. "Think of yourself alone."

He looked out of the window in the direction of the woodman's gaze. The tree was a tall elm, ~~familiar~~ familiar to him from childhood, which stood at a distance of two-thirds its own height from the front of South's dwelling. Whenever the wind blew, as it did now, the tree rocked, naturally enough; & the sight of its motion, & sound of its sighs, had gradually bred in the terrifying illusion in the woodman's mind that it would descend & kill him. Thus he would sit all day, in spite of persuasion, watching its every sway, & listening

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the melancholy Gregorian melodies which the air wrung out of it. This fear it was apparently was, rather than any organic disease, which was eating away the health of the ~~woodman~~ John South.

As the tree ~~waved~~ root South waved his head, abjectly making it his fugleman with abject obedience. "Ah – when it was quite a small tree," he said, "and I was a little boy, I thought one day of chopping it off with my hook ~~one day a dozen times~~ to make a clothes-line-prop with. But I put off doing it, & then I again thought that I would; but I forgot it, & didn't. And at last it got too big; & now 'tis my enemy, & will be the death o' me. Little did I think, when I let that sapling stay, that a time would come when it would torment me, & dash me into my grave."

"No, no," said Winterborne dreamily soothingly. But they thought it possible that it might hasten him into his grave, though in another way than by falling.

"I tell you what," added Winterborne. "I'll climb up this afternoon, & shroud lop off the lower boughs, & then it won't be so heavy, & the wind won't affect it so."

"She won't allow it – a stranger woman come from nobody knows where – she won't have it done."

"You mean Mrs Charmond? Oh, she doesn't know there's such a tree on her estate. Besides, shrouding is not felling, & I'll risk that much."

He went out, & when afternoon came he ~~he~~ returned, took a bill-hook from the woodman's shed, & with a ~~short~~ ladder climbed into the lower part of the tree,

where he began lopping off – 'shrouding' they called it at Hintock – the lowest boughs. Each of these quivered under his attack, bent, cracked, & fell into the hedge. Having cut away the lowest tier he stepped off the top of the ladder, & climbed a few steps higher, & attacked more at the next level. Thus he ascended with the progress of his work far above the top of the ladder, cutting away his perches as he went, & leaving nothing but a bare stem below him.

The work was troublesome, for the tree was large. The afternoon wore on, turning dark & misty about four o'clock. From time to time Giles cast his eyes across towards the bedroom-window of South, where, by the flickering fire in the chamber, he could see the old man watching him, sitting motionless with a hand upon each arm of the chair. Beside him sat Marty, also straining her eyes towards the skyey field of his operations.

A curious question suddenly occurred to Winterborne, & he stopped his chopping. He was operating on another person's property to prolong the life of the years of a lease, by future determination that person would considerably benefit. In that aspect of the case he doubted if he ought to go on. On the other hand he was practically working to save a man's life, & this seemed to empower him to adopt arbitrary measures.

The wind had died down to a calm, & while he was weighing the circumstances he saw coming along the road through the increasing mist a figure which, indistinct as it was, he knew well. It was Grace Melbury, on her way out from the house, probably for a short evening walk before dark. He instantly

arranged himself for a greeting from her, since she could hardly avoid passing ~~it was necessary that she should~~ pass immediately beneath the tree.

But Grace, though she looked up & saw him, was just at that time too full of the words of her father to give him any encouragement. The five years-long regard that she had for him was not kindled by her return into a flame ~~any flame to be heard~~ of sufficient brilliancy to make her rebellious. Thinking that she might not see him he cried "Grace, Miss Melbury; here I am."

She looked up again. She was near enough to see the expression of his face, & the nails in his soles, silver-bright with constant walking. But she did not reply; & dropping her glance again went on.

Winterborne's face grew strange; he mused, & proceeded automatically with his work. Grace meanwhile had not gone far. She had reached a gate, whereon she had leant sadly, & whispered to herself "What shall I do?"

A sudden fog came on, & she curtailed her walk, passing under the tree again on her return. ~~Soon she returned & passed under him again.~~ Again he said addressed her. "Grace", he said, when she was close to the trunk, "speak to me." She shook her head without stopping, & went on to a little distance, where she stood hearing him from behind the hedge.

Her coldness had been kindly meant. If it was to be done, she had said to herself, it should be begun at once. While she stood out of observation Giles seemed to recognise her meaning; with a sudden start he worked on, climbing himself higher, & cutting himself off more & more from all intercourse with the sublunary world. At last he had worked himself so high up the elm

~~HG~~

& the mist had so thickened that he could only just be discerned as a dark grey spot ~~on the keyless tree~~ on the light grey sky: he would have been altogether out of notice but for the stroke of his bill-hook, & the flight crash of a bough downward, & its crash upon the hedge at intervals.

It was not to be done thus, after all: plainness & candour were best. She went back a third time; he did not see her now, & she lingeringly gazed up at his unconscious figure, loth to put an end to any kind of hope that might live on in him still. "Giles — Mr Winterborne," she said.

He was so high amid behind the fog that he did not hear. "Mr Winterborne!" she cried again, & this time he stopped, looked down, & replied.

"My silence just now was not accident," she said in an unequal voice "My father says it is better for us not to think too much of that — engagement, or understanding, between us, that you know of. I, too, think that upon the whole he is right. But we are friends, you know, Giles, & almost relations."

"Very well," he answered as if without emphasis, in a voice which barely reached down the tree. "I have nothing to say in objection — I cannot say anything till I've thought awhile."

She added, VH with emotion in her tone, "For myself I would have married you — some day — I think. But I give way, for I see it would be unwise." He made no reply, but sat back upon a bough, placed his elbow in a fork, & rested his head upon his hand. Thus he remained

till the fog & the night had completely enclosed him from her view.

Grace heaved a divided sigh, with a tense pause between, & moved onward, her heart feeling uncomfortably big & heavy & her eyes wet. Had Giles, instead of remaining still, immediately come down from the tree to her, would she have continued in that ~~decision~~ final, acquiescent frame of mind which she had announced to him as ~~hers~~ final? ~~decision~~? If it be true, that as women themselves have declared, one of their sex is never so near much inclined to ~~take stock to~~ throw in her lot with a man for good & all as five minutes after she has told him such a thing cannot be, the probabilities are that something might have been done by the appearance of Winterborne ~~beside her~~ on the ground beside Grace. But he continued motionless & silent in that gloomy Niflheim or fog-land which involved him, & she proceeded on her way.

The spot seemed now to be quite deserted. The light from South's window made rays on the fog, but did not reach the tree. A quarter of an hour passed, & all was blackness overhead. Giles had not yet come down.

Then the tree seemed to shiver, then to heave a sigh: a movement was audible, & Winterborne ~~stepped back~~ dropped almost noiselessly to the ground. He had thought the matter out; & having returned the ladder & bill-hook to their places pursued his way homeward. He would not allow this incident to affect his outer conduct any more than the danger to his property leaseholds had done, but to lead as usual. [Two simultaneous troubles do not always make a double trouble; & thus it came to pass that Giles's practical anxiety about his houses, which would have been enough to keep him awake half the night

at any other time, was displaced & not reinforced by his sentimental trouble about Grace Melbury. ~~It~~ This severance was in reality more like a truism of her than a rupture with her; but he did not ~~feel this yet~~ realize so much at present; even ; when he arose in the morning he felt quite angry & stern: as yet the second note in the gamut of such ~~feels~~ emotions, a tender regret for his loss, had not ~~arrived~~ made itself heard.

White line ~~Chapter~~

A load of oak timber was to be sent away that morning to a builder whose works were in a town many miles off. The proud trunks were taken up from the silent spot which had known them through the buddings & sheddings of their growth for the foregoing hundred years; chained down, like slaves, to a heavy timber-carriage with enormous red wheels; & four of the most powerful horses of Melbury's horses were harnessed in front to draw them.

The horses wore their bells that day. There were sixteen to the team, carried on a frame above each animal's shoulders, & tuned to scale, so as to form two octaves, running from the highest note on the right or off-side of the leaders to the lowest on the near or left side of the shaft-horse. Melbury was among the last to retain horse-bells in that neighbourhood; for living at Little Hintock, where the lanes yet remained as narrow as before the days of turnpike-roads, these sound-signals were still as useful & time-honoured to him & his neighbours as they had ever been in former times. Much backing was saved in the course of a year by the warning notes they cast ahead; moreover the

~~tones of~~ tones of all the teams in the district being known to the carters of each, they could tell ~~in passing~~ a long way off on a dark night whether they were about to encounter friends or strangers.

The fog of the previous evening ~~still~~ lingered ~~over the woods~~ so heavily ~~that~~ that the morning could not penetrate the trees till long after its time. The load being a ~~heavy~~ ponderous one, the lane crooked, the air so thick, Winterborne ~~set out, as he often did, to~~ accompanied the team as far as the corner where it ~~turned~~ would turn into a wider road.

So they rumbled on, shaking the foundations of the road-side cottages by the weight of their progress, the sixteen bells chiming harmoniously over all, till they ~~came to the~~ had risen out of the valley, & were descending towards the more open route, the sparks rising from their creaking skid & nearly setting fire to the dead leaves alongside

Then occurred one of the ~~frequent~~ very incidents against which the hedgers and ditchers ~~had made provision~~. Suddenly there beamed into their eyes, quite close to them, the two lamps of a carriage, shorn of rays by the fog. Its approach had been quite unheard by reason of their own noise. The carriage was a ~~close~~ covered one, while behind it could be discerned another vehicle laden with luggage.

Winterborne went to the head of the team & found the coachman telling the carter that he must turn back. The carter declared that this was impossible.

"You can turn if you unhitch your string-horses", said the coachman.

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"It is much easier for you to turn than for us," said Winterborne. "We've five ton of timber on these wheels if we're an ounce."

"But I've another carriage with luggage at my back."

~~"Yes, I see~~ Winterborne admitted the strength of the argument. "But even with that," he said, "you can back better than we. And you ought to; for you could hear our bells half-a-mile off."

"And you could see our lights."

"We could n't, because of the fog."

"Well; our time's precious," said the coachman haughtily. "You are only going to some trumpery little village or other in the neighbourhood; while we are going straight to Italy."

"Driving all the way, I suppose?" said Winterborne sarcastically.

The argument continued in these terms till a voice from the interior of the carriage inquired what was the matter. It was a lady's.

She was briefly informed of the timber-people's obstinacy; & then Giles could hear her telling the footman to direct the timber-people to turn their horses' heads.

The message was brought; & Winterborne sent back the reply to say that he begged the lady's pardon, but that he could not do as she requested; that though he would not assert it to be impossible, it was impossible by comparison with the slight difficulty to her party to back their light carriages. As fate would have it, the incident with Grace Melbury on the previous day made Giles less acute than he might otherwise have shown himself, his confidence in the sex being rudely shaken.

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In fine.
Nothing could move him; & the carriages were compelled to back till they reached one of the sidings or turn-outs constructed in the bank for the purpose. Then the team came on ponderously, & the clanging of its sixteen bells as it passed the discomfited carriages tilted up against the bank, lent a particularly triumphant tone to the team's progress – a tone which, in point of fact, did not at all attach to its conductor's feelings.

Giles walked behind the timber, & just as he had got past the yet stationary carriages he heard a soft voice say "Who is that rude man? – not Melbury?" ~~Who the man is~~ The sex of the speaker was so prominent in the voice that Winterborne felt a pang of regret.

"No ma'am. A younger man, in a smaller way of business in Little Hintock. Winterborne is his name."

Thus they parted company. "Why, Mr Winterborne", said the waggoner ~~enter~~ when they were out of hearing; "that was She – Mrs Charmond! Who'd ha' thought it? What in the world can a woman that does nothing be cock-watching ~~waiting~~ out here at this time o' day for? – Oh, going to Italy – yes, to be sure – I heard she was going abroad. She can't endure the winter here."

Winterborne was vexed at the incident; the more so that he knew in his adoration of Hintock House, Mr Melbury would be the first to blame him, if it became known. But saying no more he accompanied the load to the end of the lane, & then turned back, ~~this lane~~ with an intention to call at Southis, to learn the result of the experiment of the preceding evening.

It chanced that a few minutes before this time Grace Mellony, who now rose soon enough to breakfast with her father in spite of the encumbrances of the house, had been commissioned by him to make the same inquiry at South's. Marty had been standing at the door when Miss Mellony arrived. Almost before the latter had spoken Mrs Charmed's carriages, released from the obstruction up the lane, came bowling along, & the two girls turned to regard the spectacle.

Mrs Charmed did not see them; but there was sufficient light for them to discern her outline between the carriage-windows. A noticeable feature in her coiffure was a magnificent mass of braided locks.

"How well she looks this morning!" said Grace, gazelling Mrs Charmed's sight in her with generous admiration. "Her hair so becomes her when it is worn that way. I have never seen any one more beautiful!"

"Nor have I, miss," said Marty drily, unconsciously stroking her own crown.

Grace watched the carriages with lingering regret till they were out of sight. She then left Marty & went South's way; but before she had come within sight of the house, not seeing any one of whom she was afraid, she suddenly turned back again, & sought the shelter of her own home till she should have gone away.

[End of Part III]

~~The encounter with the carriages having led him to think of Mrs Charmed~~ ~~his mind by a natural channel went from her to the several Colleges to~~ ~~their homes, & his own, which would fall into her possession on the death~~ ~~of South. He wondered what people could have been thinking about in the past~~ ~~to invent such precarious tenures; he had naturally succeeded to the~~ but having

(133 A.)

[Woodlanders] [Part 4. August.]

Wildon

Chapter XIV

The encounter with the carriages having sprung upon Winterborne's mind the image of Mrs Charmond, his thoughts by a natural channel went from her to the general fact that cottages & other houses in the two Hintocks, now his own, would fall into her possession in the event of Fontin's death. He marvelled what people could have been thinking about in the past to consent such precarious tenures as these; still more, what could have induced his ancestors at & other village Hintock people, to exchange their old copyholds for life leases. But having naturally succeeded to these

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he had done his best to keep them in order; though he
property ies through his father, & was much struck with ~~the latter's carelessness~~ in
this father's ~~blindness~~ negligence
not insuring South's life.

After breakfast, still musing on the circumstances, he went to his bedroom &
~~took out the leases~~ upstairs, turned over his bed, & drew out a flat can-
vas bag which lay between the mattress & the sacking. In this he kept his
leases, which had ~~been~~ remained there ~~unopened~~ ever since his father's death. It was the
usual hiding-place among cottage rural leaseholders for such documents. Winterborne sat down
on the bed & looked them over. They were ordinary leases for three lives, which
a member of the South family, some fifty years before this time, ~~had obtained~~
~~his grandmother~~ kindred, through whom his
father had accepted of the lord of the manor in lieu of certain copyholds & ~~other~~
land other rights, in consideration of having the dilapidated houses rebuilt by the said lord.
~~Their~~ They had come into his father's possession through his mother, who was a South.
~~Merely~~
chiefly

Pinned to the parchment of one of the indentures was a letter, which Win-
terborne had never seen before. It bore a remote date, the handwriting being
that of some solicitor or agent, & the signature the ~~owner's~~ landholder's. It
was to the effect that at any time before the ~~term~~ statement of lives ~~expired~~ shall dropped.
Mr Giles Winterborne, senior, ~~or his representatives~~ last of the stated should have the privilege of
or his representative,
adding his own & his son's life to ~~those aforesaid~~ the last life remaining, on payment of a merely
nominal sum; ~~in consideration~~ the concession being in consequence of the elder Winterborne's consent to demolish
& relinquish its site, which stood
one of the houses ~~which stood~~ at an awkward corner of the lane, & impeded the way.

The house had been pulled down, years before. Why Giles's father
had not taken advantage of this privilege to insert his own & his son's lives
it was impossible to say. The likelihood was that death alone had hindered

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him in the execution of this project, as it ~~must~~ was ~~had been~~. The elder Winterborne having been a man who took much pleasure in ~~meddling with~~ manipulating dealing with house property in his small way.

Since one of the South's still survived there was not much doubt that Giles could do what his father had left undone, ~~this~~ as far as his own life was concerned. This possibility cheered him much; for by those horses hung many things. Melbury's doubt of the young man's fitness to be the husband of Grace had been based not a little on the precariousness of his holdings in Little & Great Hintock. He resolved to attend to the business at once, the fine for renewal being a sum that he could (muster easily). ~~It~~ His scheme, however, could not ~~however be~~ carried out ~~for~~ in a day; & meanwhile he would run up to South's as he had intended to do, & learn the result of the experiment with the tree.

Marty met him at the door. "Well, Marty?" he said; & was surprised to read in her face that the case was not so hopeful as he had imagined.

"I am sorry for your labour," she said. "It is all lost. He says the tree seems taller than ever."

Winterborne looked round at it. Taller the tree certainly did seem, the gauntness of its now naked stem being more marked than before.

"It quite terrified him when he first saw what you had done to it this morning," she added. "He declared it will come down upon us and cleave us, like the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

"Well; can I do anything else?" asked he.

"The doctor says the tree ought to be cut down."

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"Oh – you've had the doctor?"

"I did not send for him. Mrs Charmond before she left heard that father was ill; & sent told him to attend him at her expense."

"That was very good of her. And he says it ought to be cut down ..... We must not cut it down without her knowledge, I suppose."

He went upstairs. There the old man sat, staring at the tree as he his now gaunt gaze were frozen on to its trunk. Whilst the tree waned afresh by this time, a wind having sprung up & blown the fog away; & his eyes turned with its waverings. They heard the footsteps of a man's, but lighter type than usual. "There is Doctor Fitzpiers again," she said, & descended. Presently his footsteps tread was heard on the naked stairs.

Mr Fitzpiers entered the sick chamber just as a doctor is wont to do more or less on such occasions, and when the room looking towards he patient with that preoccupied gaze which so plainly reveals that he has well-nigh forgotten all about the case, & the whole circumstances the person, since he dismissed them from his mind at his last exit from the same apartment. recalled the case to his thoughts

He nodded to Winterborne, with whom he was already a little acquainted, & went leisurely on to where South sat.

Fitzpiers was, on the whole, a finely formed handsome man. His eyes were dark & impressive, & were beamed with the light either of energy or of susceptivity – both it was difficult to say which; it might have been a little of both. That quick, practical eye, sharp for the surface of things & for nothing beneath it, he had not. But whether his apparent depth of vision were real, or only an artistic

~~People might have said that he seemed likely to err rather in the possession of too many ideas than of none.~~

∴ [of the highly respectable class,
Strict people, knowing a little about him, by report, might have said that
he seemed likely to err rather in the possession of too many ideas
than too few; to be a dreamy 'ist of some sort, or too deeply
steeped in some false kind of 'ism. ~~Perhaps for once the respectable people would have right~~ it will be seen that However this may be, he was undoubtedly

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accident of his corporeal moulding, nothing but his deeds could reveal. His face was rather soft than stern, charming than grand, pale than ~~bright coloured~~ flushed; his nose — ~~if it should be explained~~ if a sketch of his features be de rigueur for a person of his pretensions — was artistically beautiful enough to have been worth doing in marble by any sculptor not over busy, & was hence devoid of more knotty irregularities which often mean power; while the double-cyma or ~~Cupid~~ statuary curve of his mouth was not classical without a looseness in ~~his~~ its close. ~~His general~~ Nevertheless, either from (or the instinct towards profound things which was said to possess him), his pre-sence bespoke the philosopher rather than the ~~dandy~~ dandy or macaroni, an effect ~~in~~ which was helped by the ~~pure~~ absence of trinkets or ~~the~~ trivialities from his attire, though this was more finished & up to date than is usually the case among rural practitioners. ~~Altogether he was~~ a somewhat rare kind of ~~man~~ & doctor one. ~~gentleman, & looked as if he came for many ages than mere~~ gentleman, to have descended, as from the clouds, upon Little Hintock.

"This is an extraordinary case," he said at last, after examining & Winterborne, the trunk by conversation, & touch, & learning that the creeper about it was ivy. "Come downstairs, & I'll tell you what I think." They accordingly descended, & the doctor continued, look, "The tree must be cut down; or I won't answer for his life."

"'Tis Mrs Charmond's tree; & I suppose we must get permission?" said Giles. "If so, as she is gone away, I must speak to ~~find~~ her agent."

"Oh — never mind whose tree it is — what's a tree beside a life! Cut it down. I have not the honour of knowing Mrs Charmond as yet; but I am disposed to risk the quarrel with her."

"'Tis timber," rejoined Giles, more scrupulous than he would have been had not his own interests ~~been~~ stood so closely involved. "They never fell a stick about here without it being marked, ~~without anybody~~ first, either by her or the agent."

"Then we'll inaugurate a new era forthwith. Down with Hour boy has he complained of the tree?" he asked the doctor of Marty.

"Weeks & weeks, sir. The shape of it seems to haunt him like an evil spirit. He says that it is exactly his own age, that it has got human sense, & sprouted up when he was born on purpose to rule him; & keep him as its slave. Others have been like it afore in Hemlock." He's

They could hear Giles's voice upstairs. "Oh – he's rocking this way; he must come! And then my poor life, that's worth houses upon houses, will be squashed out o' me. Oh – Oh."

"That's how he goes on," she added. "And he'll never look anywhere else but out of the window; scarcely have the curtains drawn."

"Down with it, then", & hang Mrs Charmond," said Mr Hezekiah. "The best plan will be to wait till the evening, when it is dark, or early in the morning before he is awake, so that he doesn't see it fall, for that would terrify him worse than ever. Keep the blind down till I come, & then I'll assure him, & show him that his trouble is over."

The doctor then departed, & they waited till the evening. When it was dusk, the curtains drawn, Winterborne directed a couple of woodmen to bring a cross-cut saw; & the tall threatening tree was soon nearly off at its base. He would not fell it completely then; on account of the possible crash; but next morning, before Giles was

awake they went, & lowered it cautiously, in a direction away from the cottage. It was a business difficult to do quite silently; but it was done at last; & the elm of the same birth-year as the woodman's lay stretched upon the ground. The weakest idler that passed could now set foot on marks formerly made in the upper forks by the shoes of adventurous climbers only, & where birds alone had perched the bystanders sat down. (inaccessible nests could be examined microscopically on swaying extremities)

As soon as it was broad daylight the doctor came, & Winterborne entered the house with him. Marty said that her father was wrapped up & ready, & assumed to be put into his chair. They ascended the stairs & soon seated him. He began at once to complain of the tree, & the danger to his life, & Winterborne's house-property in consequence.

The doctor signalled to Giles, who went & drew back the printed cotton curtains. "'Tis gone, see," said Mr Fitzpiers.

As soon as the old man saw the vacant patch of sky in place of the tree-branched column so familiar to his eyes he sprang up, speechless; his eyes rose & stared from their hollows till the whites showed all round; he fell back, & a bluish whiteness overspread him.

Greatly alarmed they put him on the bed. as soon as he came a little out of his fit he gasped "O it is gone! — where — where?"

They were shrewd enough at the result of the experiment, & did all they could. His whole system seemed paralyzed by amazement. Nothing seemed to avail. Giles & Fitzpiers went & came; but uselessly. He lingered through the day, & died that evening as the sun went down.

"D — d if my remedy hasn't killed him!" murmured the doctor.

Chapter XV

When Mellbury heard what had happened he ~~turned to his daughter~~ seemed much moved; & ~~said~~ walked thoughtfully about the premises. On Smith's own account he was ~~simply~~ genuinely sorry; ~~but~~ and on Winterborne's he was the more grieved, in that this catastrophe ~~would have happened~~ had so closely followed the somewhat harsh dismissal of Giles as the betrothed of his daughter.

He was quite angry with circumstances for so heedlessly inflicting on Giles a second ~~blow~~ sorrow when the needful one inflicted by himself was all that ~~propriety demanded~~ troubled the proper order of events demanded. "I told Giles's father when he came into those houses not to spend too much money on lifehold property held neither for his own life nor his son's. But he would not listen to me. And now Giles has to suffer for it."

"Poor Giles," murmured Grace.

"Now Grace, between us two, ~~Can I be a prophet~~ it is very very remarkable! It is almost as if I had foreseen this; & I am thankful for your escape, though I am sincerely sorry for Giles. Had we not dismissed him already we could hardly have found it in our hearts to dismiss him now. So I say, be thankful. I'll do all I can for him as a friend; but as a pretender to the position of my son-in-law, that can never be thought of more."

And yet at that very moment the impracticability to which poor Winterborne's had been reduced suit was touching Grace's heart to a warmer sentiment on his behalf than she had felt for years concerning him.

He, meanwhile, was sitting down alone in the old familiar house which had ceased to be his; & taking a calm if somewhat dismal survey of affairs. The pendulum of the clock bumped every now & then against one side of the case in which it swung, as the muffled drum to his worldly march: looking out of the window he could perceive that a paralysis had come over Creedle's occupation of manuring the garden, owing, obviously, to a conviction that they might not be living there long enough to profit by next season's crop.

He looked at the leases again & the letter attached. There was no doubt that he had lost his homes by an accident which might easily have been circumvented if he had known the true conditions of his holding. The time for performance had now lapsed in strict law; but might not the intention be considered by the landholder when she became aware of the circumstances, & his moral right to retain the holdings for the term of his life be conceded?

~~While he was sitting & thinking there a step came to the door, & Melbury appe~~ His heart sank within him when he perceived that, despite all the legal reciprocities & safeguards prepared & written, the upshot of the matter amounted to this, that it depended upon the mere caprice — good or ill — of the woman he had met the day before in such an unfortunate way, whether he was to possess his homes for life or no.

While he was sitting & thinking a step came to the door, & Melbury appeared, looking very sorry for his position. Winterborne welcomed

him ~~at all~~ by a word & a look & went on with his examination of the parchments. His visitor sat down.

"Giles," he said, "this is very awkward; & I am sorry for it. What are you going to do?"

Giles informed him of the real state of affairs; & how barely he had missed availing himself of his chance of renewal.

"What a misfortune! Why was this neglected? Well, the best thing you can do is to write & tell her all about it, & throw yourself upon her generosity."

"I would rather not," murmured Giles.

"But you must," said Melbury.

In short he argued so cogently that Giles allowed himself to be persuaded; & the letter to Mrs Charmond was written & sent to Hintock House; whence, as he knew, it would at once be forwarded to her.

Melbury, feeling that he had done so good an action for in coming as almost to extenuate his previous arbitrary conduct to nothing, went home; & Giles was left alone to the suspense of awaiting for a reply from the divinity who shaped the ends of the Hintock population. By this time all the villagers knew the circumstances, & being well-nigh like one family a keen interest was the result all round.

Everybody thought of Giles; Nobody thought of Marty. Had any of them looked in upon her during those moonlight nights which preceded the burial of her father they would have

seen the girl absolutely alone in the house with the dead man. Her own chamber being nearest the stairs the coffin had been placed there for convenience; & at a certain hour of the night, when the moon arrived opposite the window, its beams streamed across the still profile of South, sublimed by the august presence of death, & onward a few feet further upon the face of his daughter, lying in her little bed in the stillness of a repose almost as dignified as that of her companion — the repose of a quiteless soul that had nothing more left on earth to lose, except a life which she did not over-value.

South was buried, & a week passed, & Winterborne watched for a reply from Mrs Charmond. Melbury was very sanguine as to its tenour; but Winterborne had not told him of the encounter with her carriage, when, if ever he had heard an apprentice tone on a woman's lips, he had heard it on hers.

The postman's time for passing was just after Melbury's men had assembled in the spar-house; & Winterborne, who when not busy on his own account would lend assistance there, used to go out into the lane every morning, & meet the postman at the end of one of the green rides through the hazel-copse, in the straight stretch of which his laden figure could be seen a long way off. Grace also was very anxious; more anxious than her father, more perhaps than Winterborne himself. This anxiety led her into the spar-house on some pretext or other almost every morning whilst they were awaiting the reply.

Fitzpiers too, though he did not personally appear, was much interested, & not altogether easy in his mind; for he had been informed by an authority (of what he had himself conjectured) that if the tree had been allowed to stand the old man would not have gone on complaining, but might have lived for twenty years.

Eleven times had Winterborne gone to that corner of the ride, & looked up its long straight slope through the wet grays of winter dawn. But though the postmans bowed figure loomed in view pretty regularly, he brought nothing for Giles. On the twelfth day the man (of missives) while yet in the extreme distance, held up his hand, & Winterborne saw a letter in it. He took it into the spar-house before he broke the seal, & those who were there gathered round him while he read, Grace looking in at the door.

The letter was not from Mrs Charmond herself, but her agent at Sherton. Winterborne glanced it over & looked up. ["It's all over," he said. "Ah!" said they all together.

"Her lawyer is instructed to say that Mrs Charmond sees no reason for disturbing the natural course of things, particularly as she contemplates pulling ~~some of~~ the houses down," he said quietly.

"Only think of that," said several.

Winterborne had turned away, & said vehemently to himself, "Then let her pull 'em down, & be d—d to her!"

Creedle looked at him with a face of seven sorrows, saying, "Ah, 'twas that sperrit that lost 'em for ye, maister!"

Winterborne subdued his feelings, & from that hour, whatever they were, kept them entirely to himself. There could be no doubt that, up to this last moment, he had nourished a feeble hope of regaining grace in the event of this negociation turning out a success. Not being aware of the fact that her father could have settled upon her a fortune sufficient to enable both to live in comfort, he deemed it now an absurdity to dream any longer ~~in that direction~~ of such a vanity as making her his wife; & sank into silence forthwith.

Yet whatever the value of taciturnity to a man among strangers, it is apt to express more than talkativeness when he dwells among friends. We use our eyes on our taciturn comrade. The infinitesimal movement of muscle, ~~line~~ hair, & ~~line~~ wrinkle, which ~~in the antipodes~~ when accompanied by a voice person goes unregarded, is watched & translated by ~~the Otaheitan~~, till the lack of it, virtually the whole surrounding circle of familiars ~~atmosphere~~ is charged with the reserved one's moods & meanings. The countryman who is obliged to judge the time of day from changes in external nature, sees a thousand successive hints & traits in the landscape which are never discerned by him who hears the regular chime of a clock. because they are never in request. In like manner do ~~do the bitant mens friends make acquaintance with his features & through them with his soul, when but for his incommunicativeness~~

This was the condition of affairs between Winterborne & his neighbours after his stroke of ill-luck. He held his tongue; they observed him, & knew that he was discomposed.

Mr Melbury, in his compunction, thought more of the matter than anyone else, except his daughter. Had Winterborne been going on in the old fashion Grace's father could have alluded to his disapproval of the alliance every day with the greatest frankness; but to speak any further on the subject he could not find it in his heart to do now. He hoped that Giles would of his own accord make some final announcement that he entirely withdrew his pretensions to Grace, & so get the thing past & done with. For though Giles had in a measure acquiesced in the wish of her family, he could make matters unpleasant if he chose to work upon Grace; & hence, when Melbury saw the young man approaching along the road one day, he kept friendliness & frigidity exactly balanced in his eye till he could see whether Giles's manner were presumptuous or not.

His manner was that of a man who abandoned all claims. "I am glad to meet ye, Mr Melbury," he said, in a low voice whose quality he endeavoured to make as practical as possible. "I am afraid I shall not be able to keep that mare I bought; & as I don't care to sell her, I should like — if you don't object — to give her to Miss Melbury. The horse is very quiet, & would be quite safe for her."

Mr Melbury was rather affected at this. "You shan't hurt your pocket like that on our account, Giles. Grace shall have the horse, but I'll pay you what you gave for her, & any expense you may have been put to for her keep."

He would not hear of any other terms, & there it was arranged. They were now opposite Melbury's house, & the timber-merchant pressed Winterborne to enter, Grace being out of the way. ["Pull round the settle, Giles," said the timber-merchant, as soon as they were within. "I should like to have a serious talk with you".

Thereupon he put the case to Winterborne frankly, & in quite a friendly way. He declared that he did not like to be hard on a man when he was in difficulty; but he really did not see how Winterborne could marry his daughter now, without even a home to take her to."

Giles quite acquiesced in the awkwardness of his situation. But from a momentary feeling that he would like to know Grace's mind from her own lips, he did not speak out positively, there & then. He accordingly departed somewhat abruptly, & went home to consider whether he would seek to bring about a meeting with her.

In the evening while he sat quietly pondering he fancied that he heard a scraping on the wall outside his house. The bough of a monthly rose which grew there sometimes made such a noise, but as no wind was stirring he knew that it could not be the rose-tree. He took up the candle & went out. Nobody was near; & as he turned the light flickered on the whitewashed rough-cast of the front, & he saw words written thereon in charcoal; which he read as follows:

"O Giles, you've lost your dwelling-place,
And therefore, Giles, you'll lose your Grace."

Giles went indoors. He had his suspicions as to the scrawler of those lines, but he could not be sure. What suddenly filled his heart far more than curiosity about their authorship was a terrible belief that they would be turning out to be true, try to see Grace as he might. They decided the question for him. He sat down & wrote a formal note to Melbury, in which he briefly stated that he was placed in such a position as to make full & plain share Melbury's view of his own & his daughter's promise, made some years before; & to wish that it should be considered as cancelled, & themselves quite released from any obligation on account of it.

Having fastened up this their plenary absolution, he determined to get it out of his hands, & have done with it at once; to which end he went off to Melbury's at once. It was now so late that the family had all retired; he crept up to the house, thrust the note under the door, & stole away as silently as he had come.

Melbury himself was the first to rise the next morning; & when he had read the letter his relief was great. "Very honourable of Giles; very honourable." he kept saying to himself. "I shall not forget him... Now to keep her up to her own true level".

It happened that Grace went out for an early ramble that morning, passing through the door-gate while her father was in the spar-house. To go in her customary direction she could not avoid passing Winterborne's house. The morning sun was shining flat upon its white surface & the words, which

She read them. Her face flushed to crimson
still remained, were immediately visible to her. She could see Giles &
Creedle talking together at the back; the charred spar-rod with which he had been writing lay on the ground
beneath the wall. Feeling pretty sure that Winterborne would observe her action
she quickly went up to the wall, rubbed out "lose", & inserted
"keep" in its stead. Then she made the best of her way home without looking
behind her. Giles could draw an inference now, if he chose.

There could not be the least doubt that Grace was filling with more gentle
sympathy with & interest in Giles Winterborne than ever she had done while
he was her promised lover; that since his misfortune those social short-
comings of this, had which contrasted so awkwardly with her later experiences of life, had
become obscured by the generous revival of an old romantic attachment to him.
Though mentally trained & tilled into foreignness of view, as compared with her youthful time,
Grace was not an ambitious girl; & might if left to herself have declined so upon Winterborne without much
discontent or unhappiness. Her feelings just now so far from latent were that the writing
on the wall had thus quickened her to an unusual rashness.

Having returned from her walk she sat at breakfast silently. When her
step-mother had left the room she said to her father: "I have made up my
mind that I should like my engagement to Giles to continue, for the present
at any rate, till I can see further what I ought to do."

Melbury looked much surprised. "Nonsense," he said sharply. "You don't
know what you are talking about. Look here." He handed across the
letter received from Giles.

Could he have seen her write on the wall? She did not know.

She read it, & said no more. Fate, it seemed, would have it this way,
& there was nothing to do but acquiesce.

(who, curiously enough, had not perceived Grace writing,)

It was a few hours days after this that Winterborne was clearing away the tree from the front of South's late dwelling, & saw Marty standing in her doorway, in shape a black figure almost without womanly contours as yet. He went up to her & said, Marty why did you write that on my wall last night? It was you, you know."

"Because it was the truth. I did not mean to let it stay; but when I was going to rub it out you came, & I was obliged to run off."

"Having prophesied one thing, why did you alter it to another? Your predictions cant be worth much."

"I have not altered it." ["But you have" "No."

"It is altered. Go & see."

She went, & read that in spite of losing his dwelling-place he would keep his Grace. Marty came back surprised. "Well, I never," she said. "Who can have made such nonsense of it? [Who indeed? said he [I'd have rubbed it all out, as the point of it is quite gone."

"You'd no business to rub it out! I didn't tell you to. I meant to let it stay a little longer."

"Some idle boy did it, no doubt." she murmured. [As this seemed very probable, & the actual perpetrator was unsuspected, Winterborne said no more, & dismissed the matter from his mind.

From this day of his life onward for a considerable time Winterborne, though not absolutely out of this house as yet, retired into the background of the human life & action thereabout — a feat not particularly difficult of performance anywhere, when the doer has the assistance of a lost prestige. Grace, thinking that Winterborne saw her write, made no further sign, & the frail bark of fidelity that she had thus timidly launched was stranded & lost.

Chapter XVI

Dr. Fitzpiers lived on the slope of the hill, in a house of much less pretension, both as to architecture & magnitude, than the timber-merchant's. The latter had without doubt been once the manorial residence appertaining to the snug & modest domain of Little Hintock, of which the boundaries were now lost by its absorption, with others of its kind, into the adjoining estate of Mrs Charmond. Though the Melburys themselves were unaware of the fact, there was every reason to believe — at least, so the parson said — that the owners of that little manor had been Melbury's own ancestors, the family name occurring in numerous documents relating to transfers of land at about the time of the Civil Wars. [Mr. Fitzpiers's dwelling, on the contrary, was comparatively modern, cottage-like, & smelt modern. It had been occupied, & was in part occupied still, by a retired farmer & his wife; who, on the surgeon's arrival in quest of a house, had accommodated him by receding from their front rooms into the kitchen quarter, whence they administered to his wants, & emerged at regular intervals to receive from him a not unwelcome addition to their income.

The cottage & its garden were so regular in their arrangement that they might have been laid out by a Dutch designer of the time of William & Mary. In a low dense hedge, cut to a wedge-shape, was a door, over which the hedge formed an arch; & from the inside of the door a straight path bordered with clipped box ran up the slope of the garden to the porch, which was exactly in the middle of the house-front, with two windows on each side. Right & left of the path were first a bed of

gooseberry-bushes, next of currant, next of raspberry, next of strawberry, next of old-fashioned flowers, at the corner opposite the porch being spheres of box resembling a pair of school globes. Over the roof of the house could be seen the orchard on yet higher ground, & behind the orchard the forest trees, reaching up to the crest of the hill.

Opposite the garden-door & visible from the parlour-window, was a swing-gate leading into a field, across which there ran a footpath. The swing gate had just been re-painted, & on one fine afternoon, before the paint was dry, & while many were still drying thereon, the surgeon was standing in his sitting-room abstractedly looking out at the different pedestrians ~~of~~ who passed & repassed ~~by that~~ along that route. ~~He~~ Being of a philosophical stamp he perceived that the character of each of these passers travellers exhibited itself in a somewhat amusing manner by his or her method of handling the gate.

As regarded the men there was not much variety: They gave the gate a kick & passed through. The women were more ~~interesting~~ contrasting. To them the sticky woodwork was a barricade, a disgust, a menace, a treachery, as the case might be.

The first that he noticed was a bouncing woman with her skirts tucked up & her hair uncombed. She grasped the gate without looking, ~~and~~ giving it a supplementary push with her shoulder, when the white imprint drew from ~~a violent~~ an exclamation in language not too refined. She went to the green grassy bank, sat down & rubbed herself ~~her shoulder~~

in the grass, cursing the while.

"Ha-ha-ha," laughed the doctor.

The girl next was a girl with her hair cropped short in whom the surgeon recognised the daughter of his late patient the woodman South. Moreover a black bonnet that she wore by way of mourning unpleasantly reminded him that he had ordered the felling of a tree which had caused her parents' death & Winterborne's losses. She walked & thought & not recklessly; but her preoccupation led her to grasp unsuspectingly the bar of the gate, & touch it with her arm. Fitzpiers felt sorry that she should have soiled that new black frock, poor as it was, for it was probably her only one. She looked at her hand & arm; seemed but little surprised; wiped off the disfigurement with an almost unmoved face, & as if without abandoning her original thoughts. Thus she went on her way.

Then there came over the green quite a different sort of personage. She walked as delicately as if she had been bred in town, & as firmly as if she had been bred in the country; she seemed one who simply knew her appearance to be attractive, but who retained some of the charm of being ignorant of that fact by forgetting it in a general pensiveness. She approached the gate. To let such a creature touch it even with the tip of her glove was to Fitzpiers almost like letting her proceed to tragical self-destruction. He jumped up & looked for his hat; but was unable to could not find

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The right tone; glancing ~~glanced~~ again out of the window ~~when~~ he saw ~~found~~ that he ~~it~~ was too late. Having come up she stopped, looked at the gate, picked up a little stick, & using it as a bayonet pushed open the obstacle without touching it at all.

He steadily watched her till she had passed out of sight, recognising her as the very young lady whom he had seen once before ~~pass~~ & been unable to identify. ~~her~~. Whose could that emotional face be? All the others he had seen in Hintock as yet oppressed ~~them~~ him with their crude rusticity; ~~but~~ the contrast offered by this suggested that she hailed from elsewhere. Precisely these thoughts had occurred to him at the first time of seeing her; but with them, he now went a little further & considered that as there had been no carriage seen or heard lately in that spot she could not have come a very long distance. She must be somebody staying at Hintock House — Possibly Mrs Charmond, of whom he had heard so much — at any rate an inmate; & this probability was sufficient to set a mild radiance in the surgeon's somewhat dull sky.

Fitzpiers sat down to the book he had been perusing. It happened to be that of a German metaphysician for the doctor was not a practical man except by fits, & much preferred the ideal world to the real, & the discovery of principles to their application. The young lady remained in his thoughts. He might have followed her: but he was not constitutionally active, & preferred a conjectural pursuit. However when he went out

for a ramble just before dusk he insensibly took the direction of Hintock House, which was the way that Grace had been walking; for it happened that her mind had run on Mrs Charmond that day & she had walked to the brow of a hill whence the house could be seen, returning by another route.

Fitzpiers reached in his turn the edge of the glen overlooking the manor-house & saw the shutters were shut, & only one chimney smoked. The mere aspect of the place was enough to inform him that Mrs Charmond had gone away, & that nobody else was staying there. Fitzpiers felt a vague disappointment that the young lady was not Mrs Charmond, of whom he had heard so much; & without pausing longer to gaze at a carcase from which the spirit had flown he bent his steps homeward.

Later in the evening Fitzpiers was summoned to visit a cottage patient about two miles distant. Like the majority of young practitioners in his position he was far from having assumed the dignity of being driven his rounds by a servant in a brougham, that flashed back the sunlight like a mirror; his way of getting about was by means of a gig which he drove himself, hitching the rein of the horse to the gate-post, shutter-hook, or garden-paling of the visited domicile, or giving pennies to little boys to hold the animal during his stay — pennies which were well earned when the cases to be attended were of a certain cheerful kind that wore out the patience of the little boys.

On this account of travelling alone the night-journeys which Fitzpiers

had frequently to take were dismal enough, a ~~curious~~ apparent perversity in nature ruling that whenever there was to be a birth in a particularly inaccessible & lonely place that event should occur in the night. The surgeon, ~~was a lad~~ having been of late years a town man, hated ~~the~~ the solitary midnight ~~roads~~ woodland. He was not ~~particularly~~ exceptionally skilful with the reins, & it often occured to his mind that if ~~at~~ in some remote depths of the ~~woodland~~ trees an accident were to happen the fact of his being alone might be the death of him. Hence he made a practice of picking up any countryman or lad ~~as~~ whom he chanced to pass by, & under the disguise of treating him to a nice drink obtained his companionship on the journey, & his convenient assistance in opening gates.

The doctor had started on his way out of the village on the night in question when the light of his lamps fell upon the musing form of Winterborne, walking leisurely along, as if he had no object in life. Winterborne was a better class of companion than the doctor usually could get, & he at once pulled up & asked him if he would like a drink though he knew that fine night.

Giles seemed rather surprised at the doctor's friendliness, but said that he had no objection, & accordingly mounted beside Mr. Fitzpiers.

They drove along under the black boughs which formed a network upon the stars, all the trees of a species alike in one respect, & no two of them alike in another. Looking up as they passed under a horizontal bough

they ~~could~~ sometimes saw objects like large tadpoles lodged diametrically across it, which Giles explained to the pheasants there at worst; & they sometimes heard the report of a gun, which reminded him that others knew what those tadpole shapes represented as well as he.

Presently the doctor said what he had been going to say for some time: "Is there a young lady staying in this neighbourhood – a very attractive girl – with a little white boa round her neck, & white fur round her gloves?"

Winterborne of course knew in a moment that Grace, whom he had caught the doctor peering at, was represented by these accessories. With a wary grimness, partly in his character, partly induced by the circumstances, he evaded an answer by saying, "I saw ~~such~~ a young lady talking to Mrs Charmond the other day; perhaps it was she."

Fitzpiers concluded from this that Winterborne had not seen him looking over the hedge. "It might have been", he said. "She is quite a gentlewoman – the one I mean. She cannot be a permanent resident in Hintock, or I should have seen her before. Nor does she look like one."

"She is not staying at Hintock House?"

"No: it is closed."

"Then perhaps she is staying at one of the cottages, or farm-houses."

"Oh no – your mistake. She was a different sort of girl altogether." As Giles was nobody Fitzpiers treated him accordingly, & apostrophized the night in continuation:

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being – in her lightness

⊗ The consummate charm of the lines seemed to Winterborne, though he ~~knew them to be~~ divined that they were a quotation, to be somehow the result of his lost love's charms upon Fitzpiers.

⁂ "Is it part of a country doctor's duties to learn ~~those~~ that views of things, may I ask, sir?" said Winterborne, adopting the Socratic εἰρωνεία method with such well-assumed ~~affected~~ simplicity of manner that Fitzpiers answered without readily of. "Oh no. The real truth is, Winterborne, that medical practice in places like this is a very rule of thumb matter: a bottle of bitter stuff for this & that old woman — the bitterer the better — compounded from a few simple stereotyped prescriptions and occasional attendance at births, where mere presence is almost sufficient, so healthy & strong are the people; & a lance for an abscess now & then. Investigation & experiment cannot be carried on without more appliances than one has here — though I have attempted it a little."

Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert: she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks, when tempests sleep, the wave of life's dark dream."

"You seem to be mightily in love with her, sir," (with a sensation of heart-sickness, and) more than ever resolved not to mention Grace by name.

"Oh no — I am not that. Winterborne (people living insulated, as I do, by) this the solitude of this place, get charged with emotive electricity (fluid like a Leyden jar) for want of some conductor at hand to dispense it. Human love (with electric) is a subjective thing — the essence of the man, as that Spinoza the philosopher says — ipsa hominis essentia: so that if any other young lady had appeared instead of the one who did appear, I should have felt just the same interest in her, & have quoted precisely the same lines from Shelley about her, as about this one I saw. Such miserable creatures of circumstance are we all!"

Love is joy accompanied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the line of our vision, just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently.

"Well, it is what we call being in love down in these parts, (said Winterborne) whether or no,"

"You are right enough if you admit that I am in love with something in my own head, & nothing-in-itself outside it at all."

Giles did not enter into this view of the case; what he had been struck with was

the curious parallelism between Mr Fitzpiers's ~~Grace's~~ manner & Grace's, as shown by the fact of both of them straying into a subject of discourse so engrossing to themselves that it made them forget it was foreign to him. [Nothing further relating to Grace passed between himself & the doctor in relation to Grace till they were on their way back. They had stopped at a wayside inn for a glass of brandy & cider hot, & when they were again in motion Fitzpiers, possibly a little warmed by the liquor, resumed the subject by saying "I should like very much to know who that young lady was."

"What difference can it make, if she's only the tree your rainbow falls on?"

"Ha-ha! True."

"You have no wife, Sir!"

"I have no wife; & no idea of one. I hope to do better things than marry & settle in Hintock. Not but that it is well for a medical man to be married; & sometimes, begad, 'twould be pleasant enough in this place, with the wind roaring round the house, & the rain & the boughs beating against it... I hear that you lost your lifehold by the death of South?"

"I did. I lost in more ways than one."

They had reached the top of Hintock Lane or street, if it could be called such where three-quarters of the road-side consisted of copse & orchard. One of the first houses they passed was Melbury's. A light was shining from a bedroom-window facing lengthwise of the lane & Winterborne glanced at it, & saw what was coming. He had withheld an answer to the doctor's

to hinder his knowledge of Grace;
inquiry, but, as he thought to himself, "Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment?" He could not hinder what was doomed to come, & might just as well have been outspoken. As they came up to the house Grace's figure was distinctly visible, drawing the two white curtains together which were used here instead of blinds.

"Why, there she is!" said Fitzpiers. "How does she come there?"

"In the most natural way in the world. It is her home. Mr Melbury is her father."

.... indeed .... indeed!

"Oh indeed, How comes he to have a daughter of that stamp?"

Winterborne laughed coldly. "Don't money do anything," he said, "if you're a promising material to work upon? Why shouldn't a Hintock girl, taken early from home, & put under proper instructors, become as finished as any other young lady, if she's got brains & good looks to begin with?"

"No reason at all why she shouldn't," murmured the surgeon with reflective disappointment. "Only I didn't anticipate quite that kind of origin for her."

"And you think an inch or two less of her now." There was a little tremor in Winterborne's voice as he spoke.

"Well," said the doctor with recovered warmth; "I am not so sure that I think less of her. At first it was a sort of blow; but dammy, I'll stick up for her. She's charming, every inch of her!"

"So she is," said Winterborne.... "But not to me!"

From this ambiguous expression of the reticent woodlander Dr. Fitzpiers inferred that Giles disliked Miss Melbury because of some haughtiness in her bearing towards him, & had on that account withheld her name. The supposition did not tend to diminish his admiration for her.

Chapter XVII

Grace's exhibition of herself in the act of pulling to the window-curtain had been the result of an unfortunate incident in the house that day — nothing less than the illness of Grammer Oliver, a woman who had never till now lain down for such a reason in her life. Like others to whom unbroken years of health has made the idea of keeping her bed almost something as repugnant as death itself, she continued on foot till she literally fell on the floor; & strange she had as yet been scarcely a day off duty since she had sickened & changed into quite a different personage from the independent Grammer of Meyard & Spar-house. Ill as she was, on one point she was firm. On no account would she see a doctor: in other words, Fitzpiers, discerned. The room in which Grace had been was not her own but the old woman's. On the girl's way to bed she had received a message from Grammer, to the effect that she would much like to speak to her that night.

Grace entered, put the room a little in order, and set the candle on a low chair beside the bed, so that the profile of Grammer as she lay cast itself in a dark shadow upon the whitened wall, her large head being still further magnified by an enormous turban, which was really her petticoat wound round in a wreath round her temples head. Grace put the room a little in order, & approaching the sick woman said, "I am come Grammer, as you wish." "Do let us send for the doctor before it gets later."

"I will not have him"; said Granma Blinder decisively.

"Then somebody to sit up with you."

"~~Don't want 'em~~. Can't abear it! No. I wanted to see you Miss Grace, because 'Ch have something on my mind. Dear Miss Grace – I took that money of the doctor, after all!"

"What money?"

"The ten pounds."

Grace did not quite understand.

"The ten pounds he offered me for my ~~corpse~~ head, because I've a large brain. I signed a paper when I took the money; ~~& I've spent two pounds of it~~ so not feeling concerned about it at all. ~~I wish now I wish I had it done it~~. I have not liked to tell ye that ~~I had really agreed~~ it was really settled with him, because you showed such horror at the notion. Well having thought it over more at length I wish I had n't done it, & it weighs upon my mind. John South's death of fear about the tree makes me think that I shall die of this .... 'Ch have been going to ask him again to let me off, but I had n't the face."

"Why?"

"I've spent some of the money – more 'n two pounds o't. It do wherrit me terribly; & I shall die o' the thought of it. that paper I signed with my holy cross, as South died of his trouble."

"If you ask him to burn the paper he will I'm sure, & think no more of it."

'Ch have done it once already, miss. But he laughed cruel-like. "Yours is such a fine brain, Grammer", er said, "that science could n't afford to lose you. Besides

X. Oh It do trouble me! If you only knew how he do chevy me round the chimmer in my dreams you'd pity me.

you've taken my money?..... Don't let your father know of this, please, on no account whatever!"

"No, no. I will let you have the money to return to him."

Grammer rolled her head negatively upon the pillow. "Even if I should be well enough to take it to him he won't like it. Though why he should, so particular, I want to look into the works of a poor old woman's headpiece like mine, when there's so many other folks about, I don't know. I know how he'll answer me. 'A lonely person like you Grammer', he'd say or he'll say, 'what difference is it to you what becomes of ye when the breath's out of your body'.... Ah. How I could do it I can't think! But Oh I was always so reckless!..... If I only had anybody to plead for me!"

"Mrs Melbury would, I am sure."

"Ay; but he wouldn't hearken to she! It wants a younger face than hers to work upon such as he."

Grace started with comprehension.

"You don't think he would do it for me?" she said.

"Oh, wouldn't he!"

"I could not go to him, Grammer, on any account. I don't know him at all."

"Ah, if I were a young lady" said the artful Grammer, "I could save a poor old woman's familiar friend a heathen doctor. instead of a Christian grave, I would do it, & be glad to. But nobody will do anything for a poor old woman but push her out of the way."

"You are very ungrateful, Grammer, to say that. But you are ill, I know, & that's why you speak so. Now believe me, you are not going to die yet. Remember you told me yourself that you meant to keep him waiting many a year."

Ay; one can joke when one is well, even in old age; but in sickness one's gaiety & ~~sport~~ falters to grief; & that which seemed small looks large; & the far-off seems grim near."

Grace's eyes had tears in them. "I don't like to go to him on such an errand Grammer", she said brokenly. "But I will, to ease your mind".

It was with extreme reluctance that Grace ~~she~~ clocked herself next morning for the undertaking. She was all the more indisposed to the journey by reason of the Grammer's allusion to the effect of a pretty face upon Doctor Fitzpiers; & hence she most illogically did that which, had the doctor never seen her, would have operated to nullify the sole motive of her journey; that is to say she put on a woollen veil which hid all her face except an occasional spark of her eyes.

Her own wish that nothing should be known of his strange & gruesome proceedings, no less than the Grammer Oliver's own desire, had led Grace ~~her~~ to take every precaution against being discovered. To go out She went by the garden door as was the safest way, all the household being having occupations at the other side. The morning looked forbidding enough when she stealthily opened it. The battle between frost & thaw was continuing in mid-air: the trees dripped on the garden-plots, where no vegetables nothing would grow for the dripping, though they were

with that curious mechanical regularity of country people in the face of hopelessness.
~~mechanically~~ planted year after year; the moss which covered the once
broad gravel terrace was swamped; & Grace stood irresolute. Then she
thought of poor Grammer, & her dreams of the doctor running after her ~~with~~
scalpel in hand, & the possibility of a case so curiously similar to Smith's
ending in the same way; & she stepped out into the drizzle.

The nature of her errand, & Grammer Oliver's account of the
~~compact she had made~~ ~~transaction with the doctor~~, lent a fascinating horror to Grace's conception
of Fitzpiers. She knew that he was a young man; but her single object
in seeking an interview with him put all considerations of his age & social
aspect from her mind. Standing, as she stood, in Grammer Oliver's shoes, he
was simply a remorseless Jove of the sciences, who would not have mercy, and
would have sacrificed; a man whom, but for this, she would have preferred
to avoid knowing. (But since, ~~though~~ in such a small village, it was impossible that
any long time could pass without their meeting, there was not much
to deplore in her having to meet him now.

But, as need hardly be said, Miss Melbury's view of the doctor as
a merciless unwavering, irresistible scientist was not quite in accordance with fact. The
real Doctor Fitzpiers was a man of too many hobbies to show
likelihood of rising to any great ~~~

~~From this ambiguous expression of the reticent woman's~~ ~~Fitzpiers inferred that Grace disliked Miss Melbury because of some~~ ~~unpleasantness in her bearing towards him, & had on that account~~ ~~withheld her name.~~

~~Chapter XVII.~~

~~The doctor seemed to be a man of too many hobbies to rise to any~~ eminence in the profession he had chosen, or to acquire any wide practice in the rural district he had marked out as his field of survey for the present. In the course of a year his mind was accustomed to passed in a grand solar sweep through all the zodiacal signs of the intellectual heaven. Sometimes it was in the Ram, sometimes in the Bull; one month he would be immersed in ~~chemical experiment~~ alchemy, another in poesy; one month in the Twins of Astrology & Astronomy; then in the Crab of German literature & metaphysics. In justice to him it must be stated that he took such studies as were ~~matters~~ immediately related with to his own profession in turn with the rest, & it had been in a month the ardour of an anatomical ardour without the possibility of a subject that he had proposed to Grammer Oliver the terms she had mentioned to her mistress. ~~When the death of poor South accused Fitzpiers had fortunately passed out of that region of the eclipses of knowledge, as Barty might have received an unexpected & shocking demand~~

As may be inferred from the tone of his conversation with Winterborne, he had lately plunged into abstract philosophy with much zest; perhaps

his keenly appreciative, modern, unpractical mind found this a realm more to his taste than any other. Though his aims were desultory Pilgrim's mental constitution was not without its admirable side; a keen inquirer even at midnight he honestly was; & the rays of his lamp, visible so far through the trees of Hintock, spread more often from a table strewn lighted with rank literatures of emotion & passion as often or as often as, or oftener than the books & matériel of science.

But read whether he meditated the muses or the philosophers, the loneliness of Hintock life was beginning to tell upon his impressionable nature. Winter in a solitary house in the country, without society, is tolerable; may even be enjoyable & delightful, given certain conditions; but these are not the conditions which attach to the life of a professional man who drops down into such a place by mere accident. They were present to the lives of Winterborne, Melbury, & Grace; but not to the doctor's. They are old associations — almost exhaustive biographical or historical acquaintance with every object, animate & inanimate, within the solitary observer's horizon. He must know all about those invisible ones of the days gone by whose feet have traversed the fields which look so grey from his windows; recalle whose creaking plough has from time to time turned those sods; whose hands planted the trees that form a crest to the opposite hill; whose horses thrown torn have trodden through that undergrowth; what birds effect that particular brake; what domestic dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, or disappointment, have been enacted in the cottages, the mansion on the street or on the green. The spot may have beauty, grandeur, salubrity, convenience; but if it lack memories it will ultimately

pall upon him who settles here without opportunity of intercourse with his kind.

In such circumstances maybe an old man dreams of an ideal friend, till he throws himself into the arms of any impostor who chooses to wear that title on his face. A young man may dream of an ideal friend likewise; but some ~~final circumstance or other~~ humour of the blood will probably lead him to think rather of an ideal mistress; & at length the rustle of a ~~girl's~~ woman's dress, the sound of her voice, or the transit of her form across the field of his vision will enkindle his soul with a flame that blinds his eyes.

The discovery of the attractive Grace's name & family would have been enough in other circumstances to lead the doctor, if not to put her personality out of his head, to change the character of his ~~regard for~~ interest in her. Instead of treasuring her image as a rarity he at most would have played with it as a toy. He was that kind of man. But could ~~Situated here he did not go so~~ far as ~~that~~ ~~speculative superstitiousness~~ cruelty. He dismissed all reverential thought about her, but he could not help taking her seriously.

He went on to imagine the impossible. So far, indeed, did he go in this futile direction that, as others are wont to do, he constructed dialogues & scenes in which Grace had turned out to be the mistress of Hemlock Manor-house, the mysterious Mrs Charmond, particularly ready & willing to be wooed by himself & nobody else. "Well, she is not that," he said finally. "But she's a very sweet nice exceptional girl."

The next morning he breakfasted (as usual) alone. It was snowing with a fine-flaked desultoriness just sufficient to make the moorland grey,

∴ to be incontinently glued up by frozen thawings now;

~~H~~

without ever achieving ~~any approach to~~ whiteness.
~~& nothing whole~~. There was not a single letter for Fitzpiers; only a medical circular & a weekly newspaper. To sit before a large fire on such mornings, & read, & gradually acquire energy till the evening came; & then, with large slight, feeling full of vigour, to pursue some engrossing subject or other till the small hours, had hitherto been his practice. But to-day he could not settle at his chair. That self-contained position he had lately occupied, in which the only ~~sense of position where~~ all the attention demanded was to the concentration of the inner eye, the all outer regard being quite gratuitous, seemed to have been taken by insidious stratagem, & for the first time he had an interest outside the house. He walked from one window to another, & became aware that the most irksome of solitudes is not the solitude of remoteness, but that which is just outside desirable company.

The breakfast hour ~~in mid~~ style; ~~was~~ spent by heavily enough, & the next ~~other~~ followed, in the same half snowy, half rainy. The weather now being the inevitable ~~counterpoise~~ relapse which ~~follows~~ sooner or later succeeds a time too radiant for the season, such as they had enjoyed in the late mid-winter at Hintock. To people at home there these changeful tricks had their interests; the strange mistakes that some of the [stet] ~~more sanguine~~ ~~parents of the~~ trees had made in budding before the month ~~were~~ impulsive the similar sanguine errors of the birds ~~with their nests~~ in framing nests that were now swamped by snow-water, & other such incidents, prevented any sense of wearisomeness in the minds of the natives. But these ~~a~~ ~~seque~~ were features of a world not familiar to Fitzpiers; &

~~The~~ the inner visions to which he had almost exclusively attended having suddenly failed in their power to absorb him he felt unutterably dreary.

He wondered how long Miss Melbury was going to stay in Hintock. The season was ~~at~~ an propitious for accidental encounters with her out-of-doors, & except by accident he saw not how they were to become acquainted. One thing was clear; any acquaintance with her could only be casual, at most of the nature of a flirtation; for he had high aims, & they would some day lead him into others spheres than this.

Thus desultorily thinking he flung himself down upon the couch, which, as in many draughty old country houses, was constructed with a hood, being in fact a legitimate development from the settle. He tried to read as he reclined; but having sat up till three o'clock that morning the book slipped from his hand & he fell asleep.

~~He arrives at Hintock~~ Chapter XVIII

It was at this time that Grace approached the house. Her knock, always soft in virtue of her nature, was softer to-day by reason of her strange errand. However it was heard by the farmer's wife ~~&~~ who kept the house, & Grace was admitted. Opening the door of the doctor's room the housewife glanced in, & imagining Fitzpiers absent asked Miss Melbury to enter & wait a few minutes whilst she should go & find him, believing him to be somewhere on the premises. Grace

acquiesced, went in & sat down close to the door.

As soon as the door was shut upon her she looked round the room, & started at perceiving a handsome man the doctor snugly ensconced in the couch, like the recumbent figure within some canopied mural tomb of the fifteenth century, except that his hands were by no means clasped in prayer. She had no doubt that this was the doctor. Awaken him hereby she could not, & her immediate impulse was to go & pull the broad ribband with a brass rosette which hung at one side of the fireplace. But expecting the landlady to re-enter in a moment she abandoned this intention, & stood gazing in great embarrassment at the reclining philosopher.

The windows of Fitzpiers's soul being at present shuttered the portals appeared less impressive than in his hours of animation; but the light abstracted from his material presence by sleep was more than counterbalanced by the mysterious influence of that state, upon the consciousness of a beholder in a stranger, & a beholder co-sensitive. So far as she could criticize at all she became aware that she had encountered a specimen of creation altogether unusual in that locality. The occasions on which Grace had observed men of this stamp when she had been were far removed from Hintock; & even then such examples as had met her eye were at a distance, & mainly of coarser fibre than the one who now confronted her.

She nervously wondered why the woman had not discovered her mistake & returned; & went again towards the bell-pull. Approaching

the chimney her back was to Fitzpiers, but she could see him in the glass. An indescribable thrill passed through her as she perceived that the eyes of the reflected image were open, gazing wonderingly at her; & under the curious unexpectedness fascination of the sight she became as if spell-bound, almost powerless to turn her head & regard the disused. However by an effort she did turn, when there he lay asleep the same as before. Hardy

This Her startled perplexity as to what he could be was meaning was sufficient to lead her to precipitately abandon her errand. She crossed quickly to the door, opened & closed it noiselessly, & went out of the house unobserved. By the time that she had gone down the path & through the garden-door into the lane she had recovered her equanimity. Here, screened by the hedge she stood & considered awhile. [Drip, drip, drip, fell the rain upon her umbrella & around; she had come out on such a morning because of the seriousness of the matter in hand; yet now she had allowed her mission to be stultified by a momentary tremulousness concerning an incident which perhaps had meant nothing after all.

In the mean time her departure from the room, stealthy as it had been, had roused Fitzpiers; & he sat up. In the reflection from the mirror which Grace had beheld there was no mystery; he had opened his eyes for a few moments, but had immediately relapsed into unconsciousness,

if indeed he had ever been positively awake. That somebody had just left entered the room he was certain, & that the lovely form ~~a figure~~ which seemed to have visited him in a dream was ~~an actuality that~~ no less than the presentation of the real person just departed he could hardly doubt.

Looking out of the window a few minutes later, down the box-edged gravel-path which led to the bottom, he saw the garden-door gently open & through it enter the young girl of his thoughts, Grace having just at this juncture determined to return & attempt the interview a second time. That he saw her coming instead of going made him ~~do~~ ask himself if his first impression of her were not a dream indeed ~~after all~~. She came hesitatingly along, carrying her umbrella so low over her head that he could hardly see her face. When she reached the point where the raspberry-bushes ended & the strawberry-bed began she made a little pause.

Fitzpiers feared that she might not be coming to him even now, & hastily quitting the room he ran down the path to meet her. The nature of her errand he could not divine, but he was prepared to give her any amount of encouragement.

"I beg pardon, Miss Melbury," he said. "I saw you from the window, & fancied you might imagine that I was not at home — if it is I if you were coming to."

"I was coming to speak one word to you, nothing more," she replied. "And I can say it here."

"No, no. Please do come in. Well then, if you will not come into

the house come so far as the porch?" Thus pressed she went on to the porch, & they stood together inside it, Fitzpiers closing her umbrella for her.

"I have merely a request or petition to make," she said. "My father's servant is ill – a woman you know her – & her illness is serious."

"I am sorry to hear it. You wish me to come & see her at once?"

"No, I particularly wish you not to come." ["Oh indeed." "Yes;] & she wishes the same. It would almost kill her. It would make her seriously worse if you were to come. ... My errand is of a peculiar & awkward nature. It is concerning a subject which weighs on her mind – that unfortunate engagement she made with you, that you might have her body after death."

"Oh – Grammer Oliver – the old woman with the fine head. Seriously ill, is she."

"And so disturbed by her rash compact! I have brought the money back – will you please return to her the agreement she signed?" Grace held out to him a couple of five-pound notes which she had kept ready tucked in her glove.

Without replying or considering the notes Fitzpiers allowed his thoughts to follow his eyes & dwell upon Grace's personality, & the sudden close relation in which he stood to her. The porch was narrow; the rain increased. It ran off the porch & dripped on the creepers, & from the creepers upon the edge of Grace's cloak & skirts.

"The rain is wetting your dress: please do come in," he said. "It really makes my heart ache to let you stay here." [Immediately] inside the front door was the door of his sitting-room: he flung it open, & stood in a coaxing attitude. Try how she would Grace could not resist the supplicatory mandate written in the face & manner of this man, & distressful resignation sat on her as she glided past him into the room — brushing his coat-sleeve with her elbow by reason of the narrowness. [He] followed her, shut the door — which she somehow had hoped he would leave open — & placing a chair for her sat down. The concern which Grace felt at the development of these commonplace incidents was, of course, mainly owing to the strange effect upon her nerves of that view of him in the mirror gazing at her with open eyes when she had thought him sleeping, which made her fancy that his slumber might have been a feint [based on] for some inexplicable reasons

She again proffered the notes: he awoke from looking at her as at a piece of [live] statuary & listened deferentially as she said, "Will you [reconsider, &] cancel the bond which poor Grammer Oliver so foolishly gave?"

"I'll cancel it without reconsideration. Though you will allow me to have my own opinion about her foolishness. Grammer is a very wise woman, & she was as wise in that as in other things. You think there was something very fiendish in the compact, do you not Miss Melbury? But remember that the most eminent of our surgeons in the past times

have entered into such agreements."

"Not peculiar — strange."

Elsom

"Yes, that may be; since strangeness is not in the nature of a thing, but in its relation to something extrinsic — in this case an unessential observer." [not.] He went to his desk & searching awhile found a paper which he unfolded & brought to her. A thick cross appeared in ink at the bottom — evidently from the hand of Grammer. Grace put the paper in her pocket with a look of great relief.

As Fitzpiers did not take up the money (half of which had come from Grace's own purse) she pushed it a little nearer him. "No, no: I shall not take it from the old woman," he said. "It is more strange that the fact of a surgeon arranging to obtain a subject for dissection that our acquaintance should be formed out of it."

"I am afraid you think me uncivil in showing my dislike to the notion. But I did not mean to be."

"Oh no no." He looked at her, as he had done before, with puzzled interest. "I cannot think, I cannot think," he murmured. "Something bewilders me greatly." He still reflected & hesitated. "Last night I sat up very late," he at last went on, "and on that account I fell into a little nap on that couch about half-an-hour ago. And during my few minutes of unconsciousness I dreamt — what do you think — that you stood in the room."

Should she tell? She merely blushed.

"You may imagine," Fitzpiers continued, now persuaded that it had indeed been a dream, "that I should not have dreamt

of you without considerable thinking about you first."

He could not be acting; that she felt assured.

"I fancied, in my vision that you stood there," he said, pointing to where she had paused. "I did not see you directly, but reflected in the glass. I thought, what a lovely creature! — the design is for once carried out. Nature has at last recovered her lost union with the Idea! My thoughts ran in that direction because I had been reading the work of a transcendental philosopher last night; & I dare say it was the dose of Idealism that I had received from it that made me scarcely able to distinguish between reality & fancy. I almost wept when I awoke, & found that you had appeared to me in Time, but not in Space, alas!"

At moments there was something theatrical in the delivery of Fitzpiers's effusion; yet it would have been inexact to say that it was intrinsically theatrical. It often happens that in situations of unrestraint, where there is no thought of the eye of criticism, the real feeling glides into a mode of manifestation not easily distinguishable from rodomontade. A veneer of affectation overlies a bulk of truth, with the evil consequence if perceived, that the latter is rejected substance is estimated by the superficies, & the whole rejected.

Grace, however, was no specialist in men's manners, & she admired the sentiment without thinking of the form. And she was embarrassed; "lovely creature" made explanation awkward to her gentle modesty.

"But can it be," said he suddenly, "that you really were here?"

faltered

"I have to confess that I have been in the room once before," she.

"The woman showed me in, & went away to fetch you; but as she did not return I left."

"And you saw me asleep," he murmured, with the faintest show of hesitation.

"Yes – if you were asleep, & did not deceive me."

"Why do you say if?"

"I saw your eyes open in the glass, but as they were closed when I looked round upon you I thought you were perhaps deceiving me."

"Never," said Fitzpiers fervently. "Never could I deceive you."

Foreknowledge to the distance ~~foreknowledge~~ of a year or so, ~~of foreseeing~~ in either of them, might have spoilt the effect of that pretty speech. Never deceive her! But they knew nothing, & the phrase had its day. ~~did its duty.~~

Grace began now to be anxious to terminate the interview; but the compelling power of Fitzpiers's atmosphere still held her there. She was like an inexperienced actress who, having at last taken up her position on the boards, & spoken her speeches, does not know how to move off. The thought of Grammer occurred to her. "I'll go at once & tell poor Grammer of your generosity," she said. "It will relieve her at once."

"Grammer's a nervous disease too – how singular," he answered accompanying her to the door. "One moment – look at this – it is something which may interest you."

He had thrown open the door on the other side of the passage, & she saw a microscope on the table of the confronting room. "Look into it please; you'll be interested," he repeated.

She applied her eye & saw the usual circle of light patterned

all over with a cellular tissue of some indescribable sort. "What do you think that is?" said Fitzpiers.

She did not know.

"That's a fragment of old John South's brain which I am investigating.

She started back, not from aversion, but with wonder as to how it should have got there. Fitzpiers laughed. "Here am I," he said, "endeavouring to carry on simultaneously the study of physiology & transcendental philosophy, the material world & the ideal, so as to discover if possible a point of contact between them; & your finer sense is quite offended!"

"Oh no, Mr Fitzpiers," said Grace earnestly. "It is not so at all. I know from seeing your light at night how deeply you meditate & work. Instead of condemning you for your studies I admire you very much!"

Her face, upturned from the microscope, was so sweet, & sincere, & self-forgetful in its aspect that the susceptible Fitzpiers ~~was almost overwhelmed~~ more than wished to annihilate the lineal yard which separated it from his own. Whether anything of the kind showed in his eyes, or not, Grace remained no longer at the microscope; but quickly went her way into the rain.

Wilson Niagara Fall 5th

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Proofs to Thomas Hardy Esq
Max Gate
Dorchester

[Woodlanders] [Part V. Sept]

Chapter XIX

Instead of resuming his investigation of South's brain – which perhaps was not so interesting under the microscope as might have been expected from the importance of that organ in life – Fitzpiers reclined & ruminated on the interview. Grace's curious susceptibility to his presence – though it was as if the currents of her life were disturbed rather than attracted by him – added a special interest to her general charm. Fitzpiers was in a distinct degree scientific, being ready & zealous to interrogate all physical manifestations; but primarily he was an idealist. He believed that behind the imperfect lay the perfect; that rare things were to be discovered amidst a bulk of commonplace; that results in a new & untried case might be different from those in other cases where the conditions had been precisely similar. Regarding his own personality as one of unbounded & undimmed possibilities, because it was his own – notwithstanding that the factors of his life existence had worked out a sorry product for thousands – he saw nothing but what was regular in his discovery at Hintock of an altogether exceptional being of the other sex, who for nobody else would have had any existence.

One habit of Fitzpiers's — common enough in dreamers of more advanced age than in men of his years — was that of talking to himself. He paced round his room with a selective tread upon the more prominent blooms of the carpet, & murmured: "This phenomenal girl will be the light of my life while I am at Hintock; & the special beauty of the situation is that our attitude & relations to each other will be purely spiritual. Socially we can never be intimate. Anything like matrimonial intentions towards her — charming as she is — would be absurd. They would spoil the ethereal character of my regard. And indeed I have other aims on the practical side of my life."

Fitzpiers restored a regulation thought on the advantageous marriage he was bound to make with a woman of family as good as his own, & of purse much longer. But as an object of contemplation for the present, as objective spirit rather than corporeal presence, Grace Melbury would serve to keep his soul alive & to relieve the monotony of his dull days.

His first notion, acquired from the mere sight of her without converse — that of an idle & vulgar flirtation with a timber-merchant's pretty daughter, grated painfully upon him now that he had found what Grace intrinsically was. Personal intercourse with such as she could take no lower form than intellectual communion, & mutual explorations of the world of thought. Since he could not call at her father's, having no practical views, cursory encounters in the lane, in the wood, coming & going to & from church, or in passing her dwelling, were what the acquaintance would have to feed on

Such anticipated glimpses of her now & then realized themselves in the event. Rencounters of not more than a minutes duration, frequently repeated, will build up an ~~intimacy~~ mutual ~~personal~~ interest, even an intimacy, in a lonely place. Theirs grew as imperceptibly as the tree-twigs budded ~~buds unfolded~~. There never was a particular moment at which it could be said they became friends, yet a delicate understanding now existed between two who in the winter had been strangers.

Spring weather came on rather suddenly, the unsealing of buds that had long been swollen accomplishing itself in the space of one warm night. The rush of sap in the veins of the trees could almost be heard. The ~~April & May~~ Spring flowers of late April took up a position unseen & spotted as if they had been blooming a long while, though there had been no trace of them the day before yesterday; ~~the~~ birds began to not mind getting wet. Indoor people said they had heard the nightingale, to which outdoor people replied contemptuously that they had heard him a fortnight before.

The young doctor's practice being scarcely so large as a London surgeon's he frequently walked in the wood. Indeed such practice as he had he did not follow up with the assiduity that would have been necessary for developing it to exceptional proportions. ~~Too frequently he would "look before & after, & pine for what was not."~~

One day, book in hand, he walked in a part of the wood where the trees were mainly oaks. It was a calm afternoon, & everywhere around there was that sign of great undertakings on the part of vegetable nature which is apt to

~~as~~ till ~~make~~ reflective human beings who are not undertaking much themselves with a sudden uneasiness at the contract. He heard in the distance a curious sound, something like the quack of a duck, which, though it was common enough here about at this time, was not common to him.

Looking through the trees Fitzpiers soon perceived the origin of the noise. The barking season had just commenced, & what he had heard was the tear of the ripping-tool as it ploughed its way along the sticky parting between the trunk & the rind. Melbury did a large business in bark, & as he was Grace's father, & possibly might be found on the spot, Fitzpiers was attracted to the scene even more than he might have been by its intrinsic interest. When he got nearer he recognised among the workmen the two Timothys, & Robert Creedle, who probably had been "lent" by Winterborne; Marty South also assisted. [Each tree doomed to this flaying process was first attacked by Creedle; with a small bill-hook, he carefully freed the collar of the tree from twigs & patches of moss which encrusted it to a height of a foot or two above the ground, an operation comparable ~~to~~ to the little toilette of the executioner's victim. After this it was barked in its erect position to a point as high as a man could reach. If a fine product of vegetable nature could ever be said to look ridiculous it was the bare now, when the oak stood naked-legged, & as if ashamed; till the axe-man came & cut a ring round it; and the two Timothys finished the work with the cross-cut-saw.

As soon as it had fallen the barkers attacked it like locusts; & in a short time not a particle of rind was left on the trunk & larger limbs. Marty

and there she stood, encaged amid the mass of twigs & buds like a great bird,

South was an adept at peeling the upper parts, running her tool into the smallest branches, beyond the furthest points to which the skill & patience of the men enabled them to proceed — branches which in their lifetime had swayed high above the bulk of the wood, & caught the latest & earliest rays of the sun & moon while the lower part of the forest was still in shade darkness.

"You seem to have a better instrument than they, Marty," said Fitzpiers.

"No Sir," she said, holding it up. the tool — a horse's leg-bone fitted into a handle & filed to an edge — "'tis only that they've less patience with the twigs, because their time is worth more than mine."

A little shed had been constructed on the spot, of thatched hurdles and boughs; & in front of it was a fire, over which a kettle sang. Fitzpiers sat down inside the shelter, & went on with his reading, except when he looked up to observe the scene & the actors. The thought that he might settle here & become welded in with this sylvan life by marrying Grace Melbury crossed his mind for a moment. Why should he go further into the world than where he was? The secret of quiet happiness lay in limiting the ideas & aspirations; these mens thoughts were conterminous with the margin of the timbered woodlands; & why should not his be limited to likewise a small practice among the people around him being the bound of his desires?

Presently Marty South discontinued her operations upon the quivering boughs, & came out from the reclining oak, & prepared tea. When it was ready the men were called; & Fitzpiers being in a mood to join sat down with them.

The latent reason of this lingering here so long revealed itself when the faint creaking of the joints of a vehicle became audible, & one of the men said "Here's he." Turning their heads they saw Melbury's gig approaching, the wheels muffled by the yielding moss. [The timber-merchant was on foot leading the horse, looking back at every few steps to caution his daughter, who kept her seat, to where she had to duck her head so as to avoid the overhanging branches. They stopped at the spot where the bark-ripping had been temporarily suspended; Melbury cursorily examined the heaps of bark, & drawing near to where the workmen were sitting down accepted their invitation to have a dish of tea, for which purpose he hitched the horse to a bough, & Grace declined to take any of their beverage, & remained in the vehicle, looking dreamily at the sunlight that came in thin threads through the hollies with which the oaks were interspersed. [When Melbury stepped close up to the shelter he perceived that the doctor was present, & for the first time warmly appreciated Fitzpiers's invitation to sit down on the log beside him.

"Bless my heart, who would have thought of finding you here," he said, obviously much pleased at the circumstance. "I wonder now if my daughter knows you are so nigh at hand. I don't expect she do."

He looked out towards the gig wherein Grace sat, her face still turned in the opposite direction. "She doesn't see us. Well never mind: let her be."

Grace was indeed quite unconscious of Fitzpiers's propinquity. She was thinking of something which had little connection with the scene before her. Her mind ran upon her late friend, lost as soon as found, Mrs Charmond; of her

— thinking of her)

capricious conduct, & of the contrasting scenes she was possibly enjoying at that very moment in other climes, which Grace herself had hoped to be introduced by her friend's means. She wondered if His patronising lady would return to Hintock during the summer, & whether the acquaintance which had been nipped on the last occasion of her residence here would develope on the next.

Melbury told ancient timber-stories as he sat briefly relating them to Fitzpiers, & obligingly to the men, who had heard them often before. Marty, who poured out tea, was just saying, "I think I'll take out a cup to Miss Grace", when they heard a clashing of the gig-harness, & turning round head Melbury saw that the horse had become restless, & was jerking about the vehicle in a way which alarmed its occupant, though she refrained from screaming. Melbury jumped up immediately, but not more quickly than Fitzpiers; & while her father ran to the horse's head & speedily began to control him, Fitzpiers was alongside the gig assisting Grace to descend. Her surprise at his appearance was so great that, & independent far from making a calm descent, she was very nearly lifted down in his arms. He relinquished her when she touched As soon Depositing her on the ground, and hoped she was not frightened.

"Oh no, not much", she managed to say. "There was no danger — unless he had run under the trees where the boughs are low enough to hit my head."

"Hum" "Which was by no means an impossibility, & justifies any amount of alarm." He referred to what he thought he saw written in her face, & she could not tell him that this had little to do with the horse, but much with himself. His contiguity had in fact the same effect upon her as those former

occasions on which he had come to her
~~times & nearer he came~~ closer than usual, that of producing in her an unaccountable tendency to peevishness. Melbury soon put the horse to rights, & seeing that Grace was safe turned again to the workpeople. His daughter's nervous distress had passed off in a few moments, & she said quite gaily to Fitzpiers as she walked with him towards the group, "There's destiny in it you see — I was doomed to join in your picnic, although I did not intend do so". [Marty prepared her especially a comfortable place, & she sat down in the circle, & listened to Fitzpiers while he drew from her father & the bark-rippers sundry narratives of their fathers', & their grandfathers', and their own adventures in these woods; of the mysterious sights they had seen only to be accounted for by supernatural agency; of white witches & black witches; & the standard story of the spirits of the two brothers who had fought & fallen & had haunted Nuttock House till they were exorcised by the priest, & compelled to retreat to a swamp in this very wood, where they sat whence they were returning to their old quarters at the rate of a cock's stride every new-year's day; hence the local saying, "On New-year's tide, a coe's stride."

It was a pleasant time. The smoke from the little fire of peeled sticks rose between the sitters & the sun-light, & behind its blue veil stretched the naked arms of the prostrate trees. The smell of the uncovered sap mingled with the smell of the burning wood, & the sticky inner surface of the scattered bark glistened as it revealed its pale madder hues to the eye. Melbury was so highly satisfied at having Fitzpiers as a sort of guest that he would have

Their way homeward ran along the crest of a lofty hill, whence on the right they beheld a wide valley, differing both in feature & atmosphere from that of the Hintock precincts. It was the cider country, which met the woodland district on the axis of this hill. Over the vale the air was blue as sapphire — such a blue as outside that apple-valley was never seen. Under the blue the orchards were in a blaze of bloom, some of the richly flowered lanes running almost up to where they passed along. Over a gate which opened down into the incline a man leant on his arms, regarding this fair promise so intently that he did not observe their passing.

"That was Giles," said Melbury when they had gone by.

"Was it? Poor Giles," said she.

"All that blooth means heavy autumn work for him & his hands. If no blight happens before the setting the apple yield will be such as we have not had for years."

Meanwhile, in the wood they had come from, the men ———

sat on for any length of time; but Grace, on whom Fitzpiers's eyes only too frequently alighted, seemed to think it incumbent upon her to make a show of going; & her father thereupon accompanied her to the vehicle.

As the doctor had helped her out of it he appeared to think that he had excellent reasons for helping her in, & performed the attention lingeringly enough.

"What were you almost in tears about just now?" he asked softly.

"I don't know," she said; & the words were strictly true.

Melbury mounted on the other side, & they drove on out of the grove, their wheels silently crushing delicate-patterned mosses, hyacinths, primroses, lords-&-ladies, & other strange plants, & cracking up little sticks that lay across the track.

The men had sat on so long that they were indisposed to begin work again that evening; they were paid by the ton, & their time for labour was as they chose. They placed in rows for the carters, which the last patterings of bark packed up their log them further & further away from the shed; & thus they gradually withdrew as the sun went down.

Fitzpiers had opened his book again, though he could hardly see a word in it, & sat before the dying fire, scarcely knowing of the men's departure. He dreamed & mused till his consciousness seemed to occupy the whole space of the woodland around, so little was there of jarring sight or sound to hinder perfect unity with the sentiment of the place. The idea returned upon him of sacrificing all practical aims to live in calm contentment here, & instead of going on elaborating new conceptions with infinite pains to accept quiet domesticity according to the oldest & homeliest

notions. These reflections detained him till the wood was embrowned with the coming night, & the shy little bird of this dusky time had begun to ~~produce his pearly notes~~ pour out all the intensity of his eloquence from a bush not very far off.

Fitzpiers's eyes commanded as much of the ground in front as was open. Entering upon this he saw a figure, whose direction of movement was towards the spot where he sat. The surgeon was quite shrouded from observation by the recessed shadow of the hut, & there was no reason why he should move till the stranger had passed by. ~~He saw~~ The shape resolved itself into a woman's; she was looking on the ground, & walking slowly as if searching for something that had been lost, her course being precisely that of Mrs Melbury's gig. Fitzpiers by a sort of divination jumped to the idea that the figure was Grace's; her nearer approach made the guess a certainty

Yes, she was looking for something; & she came round by the prostrate trees that would have been invisible but for their white nakedness, which enabled her to avoid them easily. Thus she approached the heap of ashes, & acting upon what was suggested by a still shining ember or two, she took a stick & ~~with it~~ stirred the heap, which thereupon burst into a flame. On looking around by the light thus obtained she for the first time saw the illumined face of Fitzpiers, precisely in the spot where she had left him.

Grace gave a start & a scream: the place had been associated with him in her thoughts, but she had not expected to find him there still. Fitzpiers

lost not a moment in rising & going to her side.

"I frighten you dreadfully I know," he said. "I ought to have spoken; but I did not at first expect it to be you. I have been sitting here ever since."

He was actually supporting her by his arm, as though under the impression that she was quite overcome, and he in danger of falling. As soon as she could collect her ideas she gently withdrew from his grasp, & explained what she had returned for: in getting up or down from the gig, or when sitting by the fire, she had dropped her purse

"Now we will find it," said Fitzpiers.

He threw an armful of last years' leaves on the fire, which made the flame leap higher, & the encompassing night shades to weave themselves into denser contract, turning eve into night in a moment. By this radiance they groped about on their hands & knees; Fitzpiers tall rested on his elbow, & looked at Grace. "We almost always meet in odd circumstances," he said; "and this is one of the oddest. I wonder if it means anything?"

"Oh no, I am sure it does'n't," said Grace in haste, quickly assuming an erect posture. "Pray don't say it any more.

"I hope there was not much money in the purse," said Fitzpiers, rising to his feet more slowly, & brushing the leaves from his trousers. "Scarcely any. I cared most about the purse itself, because it was given me. Indeed, money is of little use at Hintock; there's hardly any way of spending it than on Crusoe's island."

They had given up the search when Fitzpiers discerned something by his foot, he said, "Here it is" "So that your father, mother, friend, or admirer will

not have his or her feelings hurt by a sense of your negligence after all?"

"Oh he knows nothing of what I do now."

"The admirer?" said Fitzpiers slily.

"I don't know if you would call him that," said Grace with simplicity. "The admirer is a superficial, conditional creature, & this person is quite different."

"He has all the cardinal virtues."

"Perhaps — though I don't know them precisely."

"Not do I." You unconsciously practise them, Miss Melbury, which is better. According to Schleiermacher they are Fortitude, Discretion, Wisdom, & Love; & his is the best list that I know."

"I am afraid poor — " she was going to say that she feared ~~him~~ Winterborne, the giver of the purse years before — had not much discretion, though he had all the other three; but she determined to go no further in this direction, & was silent.

These half-revelations made a perceptible ~~an immense~~ difference in Fitzpiers. His sense of personal superiority vanished away, & Grace assumed in his eyes the true aspect of a mistress in her lover's regard.

"Miss Melbury," he said suddenly; "I divine that this virtuous man you mention has been refused by you."

She could do no otherwise than admit it. ~~assent to this.~~

"I did not inquire without good reason. God forbid that I should kneel ~~in~~ at another's place at any unfairly. ~~possess any man unfairly~~ shrine. But my dear Miss Melbury,

now that he is gone, may I draw near?"

"I – I can't say anything about that!" she cried quickly. "Because when a man has been refused you feel sorry for him, & like him more than you did before."

This increasing complication added still more value to Grace in the Surgeon's eyes: it rendered her adorable. "But cannot you say?" he pleaded distractedly.

"Because I'd rather not." – I think I must go home at once."

"Oh yes." said Felixpeirs. But as she did not move she felt it awkward to walk straight away from him; & so they stood silently together. A diversion was created by the accidental flight of two birds, that had been roosting above their heads, or resting there, tumbling one over the other into the hot ashes at their feet, apparently engrossed in a desperate quarrel that prevented the use of their wings. They speedily parted, however, & flew up, & were seen no more.

"That's the end of what is called love!" said some one.

The speaker was neither Grace nor Felixpeirs, but Marty South, who approached with her face turned up to the sky in her endeavor to trace the birds. Suddenly perceiving Grace she exclaimed, "Oh – Miss Melbury! – I have been following they pigeons, & did'nt see you. – And here's Mr Winterborne!" she continued shyly, as she looked towards Felixpeirs, who stood in the background.

"Marty," ~~said~~ Grace interrupted, "I want you to walk home with me – will you? Come along." And without lingering longer she took hold of Marty's arm & led her away.

They went between the spectral arms of the peeled trees as they lay, & onward by a path where there were no oaks, & no barking, & no Fitzpiers – nothing but copse-wood, between which the primroses coned could be discerned in pale bunches. "I – didn't know Mr Winterborne was there," said Marty, breaking the silence when they had nearly reached Grace's door.

"Nor was he," said Grace.

"But Miss Melbury – I saw him."

"No," said Grace. "It was somebody else. Giles Winterborne is nothing to me."

Chapter XX

The leaves over Hintock grew denser in their substance, & the woodland trees seemed to be larger change from an open filagree to a solid opaque body of infinitely larger shape with importance. The boughs cast green shades, which hurt the complexion of the girls who walked here; & a fringe of them which overhung Mr Melbury's garden dripped on his seed-plots when it rained, pitting their surface as with pock-marks, all over. Till Melbury declared that gardens in such a place were no good at all. The two trees that had created all the winter left off creaking, the whirr of the night-jar, however, forming a very satisfactory continuation of uncanny music from that quarter. Except at mid-day the sun was not seen complete by the Hintock people eyes, but rather in the form of numerous little stars staring through the leaves.

†. ~~But~~ It was not Grace who had passed, however, but several of the ordinary village girls ~~of their acquaintance~~ in a group — some steadily walking, some in a mood of wild gaiety.

~~The dim wood~~ it had Such an appearance on Midsummer eve of this year, & as the hour grew later, & nine o'clock drew on, the irradiation of the day-time became broken up by weird shadows & ghostly nooks of indistinctness. ~~The~~ Imagination could trace upon the trunks & boughs strange faces & figures ~~that were~~ shaped by the dying lights; the surfaces of the holly leaves would here & there shine like peeping eyes, while such fragments of the sky as were visible between the trunks assumed the aspect of sheeted forms & cloven tongues. This was before the moon ~~rose~~ rises. Later on, when that planet was getting command of the upper heaven, & consequently shining with an unbroken face into such open glades as there were in the neighbourhood of the hamlet, it became apparent that the margin of the wood ~~that~~ which approached the timber-merchant's premises was not to be left to its customary stillness of ~~that~~ the reposeful time.

Fitzpiers, having heard a voice or voices, was looking over his garden gate, where he now looked more frequently than into his books. ~~Some [illegible] by the cottage girls go by at the~~ fancying ~~[illegible]~~ met Grace might be abroad with ~~some friends.~~ some cleaning ~~[illegible]~~ ~~moonlight, & wondered what they were going to do at such an hour~~. He was now irretrievably committed in heart to Grace Melbury, though he was by no means sure that she was so far committed to him. That the Idea had for once completely fulfilled itself in the objective substance – which he had hitherto ~~been~~ deemed an impossibility – he was enchanted enough to fancy must be the case at last. ~~The object being his angel Grace~~ [opposite] He quietly asked his landlady, who was also in the garden, what these girls were intending, & she informed him that

it being old midsummer ~~night~~ eve, they were about to attempt some spell or enchantment which would afford them a glimpse of their future partners for life. She declared it to be an ungodly performance, & one which she for her part would never countenance; saying which she entered her house & retired to bed.

The young man lit a cigar, & followed slowly up the road. They ~~saucy~~ the bevy of maidens had turned into the wood at an opening between Mellony's & Marty South's; but Fitzpiers could easily track them by their voices, low as they endeavoured to keep their tones.

In the meantime other inhabitants of little Hintock had become aware of the nocturnal experiment about to be tried, & were also sauntering stealthily after the frisky maidens. Miss Melbury had been informed by Marty South during the day of the proposed peep into futurity, & being only a girl like the rest, she was sufficiently interested & wish to see the issue. The moon ~~being~~ was so bright & the night so calm that she had no difficulty in persuading Mrs Melbury to accompany her; & they, joined by Marty, ~~the~~ there went onwards in the same direction.

Passing Winterborne's house they heard a noise of hammering. Marty explained it. This was the last night on which his paternal roof would shelter him, the days of grace since it fell into hand having expired; & Giles was taking down his cupboards & bedsteads with a view to an early exit next morning. His encounter with Mrs Charmond had cost him dearly.

When they had proceeded a little further Marty was joined by Grammer Oliver (who was as young as the youngest in such matters), & Grace & Mrs Melbury went on by themselves till they had arrived at the spot chosen by the ~~coming interest~~ village daughters, whose primary intention of keeping their expedition a secret had been quite defeated. Grace & her step-mother paused by a holly tree; & at a little distance stood Fitzpiers under the shade of a young oak, intently observing Grace, who was in the full rays of the moon.

He watched her without speaking, & unperceived by any but Marty & Grammer, who had drawn up on the dark side of the same holly which ~~sheltered~~ sheltered Mrs & Miss Melbury on its bright side. The two former conversed in low tones.

"If they two come up in word next midsummer night they'll come as one," said Grammer, signifying Fitzpiers & Grace. "Instead of my skeleton he'll carry home her living carcase before long. But though she's a ~~good~~ lady in herself, & worthy of any such as he, it do seem to me that he ought to marry somebody more of the sort of Mrs Charmond, that Miss Grace should make the best of Winterborne".

Marty returned no comment; & at that minute the girls, some of whom were from Great Hintock, were seen advancing to work the incantation, it being now about midnight.

"Directly we see anything we'll run home as fast as we can," said one,

whose courage had begun to fail her. To this he rest assented, not knowing that a dozen neighbours lurked in the bushes around.

"I wish we had not thought of trying this," said another; "but had contented ourselves with the hole-digging to-morrow at twelve, & hearing our husbands' trades. It is too much like having dealings with the Evil One to try to raise their forms."

However they had gone too far to recede, & slowly began to march forward in a skirmishing line through the trees towards the deeper recesses of the wood. As far as the listeners could gather, the particular form of black art to be practised on this occasion was one connected with the sowing of hemp-seed, a handful of which was carried by each girl. At the moment of their advance they looked back, & discerned the figure of Miss Melbury who, alone of all the observers, stood in the full face of the moonlight, deeply engrossed in the proceedings. By contrast with her life of late years, they made her seem as if she had receded a couple of centuries in the world's history. She was rendered doubly conspicuous by her light dress, & after a few whispered words one of the girls — a bouncing maiden, plighted to Timothy Tangs's [illegible] — asked her if she would join in. Grace with some excitement said that she would, & moved on a little in the rear of the rest.

Soon the listeners could hear nothing of their proceedings beyond the faintest occasional rustle of leaves. Grammer whispered again to Marty: "Why didn't ye go & try your luck with the rest of the maids?"

"I don't believe in it!" said Marty shortly.

— the silly hussies should have kept it quiet.

"Why half the parish is here & I see Mr Winterborne through the leaves, just come up with Robert Creedle. Marty, we folks ought to act the part o' Providence sometimes — do go & tell him that if he stands just behind the bush at the bottom of the slope, Miss Grace must pass down it when she comes back, and most likely she will rush into his arms; for as soon as the clock strikes they'll bundle back home-along like hares. I've seen such Carries before."

"Do you think I'd better?" said Marty reluctantly.

"Oh yes — he'll bless ye for it."

"I don't want that kind of blessing!" But after a moments thought she went, & delivered the information; & Grammer had the satisfaction of seeing Giles walk slowly to the bend in the leafy defile along which Grace would have to return.

Meanwhile Mrs Melbury, deserted by Grace, & had perceived Fitzpiers, & Winterborne, & also the move of the latter. ~~A similar kind of idea to~~ an improvement on Grammer's idea entered the mind of Mrs Melbury, ~~She went across to the doctor~~; for she had lately discerned, what her husband had not, that Grace were rapidly fascinating ~~this desirable gentleman~~ the surgeon. She therefore drew near to Fitzpiers.

"You should be where Mr Winterborne is standing," she said to him significantly. "She will run down through that opening much faster than she went up it, if she is like the rest of the girls."

Fitzpiers did not require to be told twice. He went across to Winterborne, & stood beside him. Each knew the probable purpose of the other in standing there, & neither spoke, Fitzpiers scorning to look upon Winterborne as a rival, & Winterborne adhering to the off-hand manner of indifference which had grown upon him since his dismissal.

Neither Grammer nor Marty South had seen the surgeon's manœuvre, & still to keep Winterborne, as she supposed, the old woman suggested to the wood; her request that she should walk forward at the heels of Grace, & "tole" her down the required way if she showed a tendency to turn in another direction. Poor Marty, always doomed to sacrifice desire to obligation, walked forward accordingly, & waited, still silent, for the retreat as a beacon, of Grace and her giddy companions — now quite out of hearing.

The first sound to break the silence was the distant note of Great Hintock clock striking the significant hour. About a minute later that quarter of the wood in which the girls had wandered resounded with the flapping of disturbed birds; then two or three hares & rabbits bounded down the glade from the same direction, & after these the rustling & cracking of leaves & dead twigs denoted the hurried approach of the adventurers, whose fluttering gowns soon became visible. Miss Melbury having gone forward quite in the rear of the rest was one of the first to return, & the excitement being contagious she ran laughing towards Marty, who still stood as a beacon hand-post to guide her; then passing on she fled round the safer bush

where the undergrowth narrowed to a gorge. Many arrived at her heels just in time to see the result. Fitzpiers had quickly stepped forward in front of Winterborne, who, disdaining to shift his position, had turned on his heel; & then the surgeon did what he would not have thought of doing but for Mrs Melbury's encouragement, & the romance of an ever sentiment of an ever which effaced conventionality. Stretching out his arms as the white figure burst upon him he captured her in a moment, as if she had been a bird.

"Oh!" cried Grace in her fright.

"You are in my arms, dearest," said Fitzpiers. "and I am going to claim you, & keep you there for all our two lives".

She rested on him like one utterly ~~overcome~~ mastered; & it was several seconds mastered before she recovered from this helplessness. Subdued screams & struggles audible from neighbouring brakes revealed that there had been other lurkers thereabout for a similar purpose. Grace, unlike the most of these companions of hers, instead of gasping & writhing said in a trembling voice, "Mr Fitzpiers, will you let me go!"

"Certainly" he said, laughing, "as soon as you have recovered."

She waited another few moments, then quietly & firmly pushed him aside, & glided on her path, the moon whitening her hot blush away. But it had been enough: new relations between them had begun.

The case of the other girls was different, as has been said. They wrestled struggled & tittered, only escaping after a desperate struggle. Fitzpiers could hear

these enactments (going on still) after Grace had left him, & he ~~stood~~ remained on the spot where ~~he~~ had ~~found her~~ caught her, Winterborne having gone away. Or a sudden another girl came bounding down ~~by~~ the same descent that had been followed by Grace; a ~~tall~~ fine-framed young woman, with raised arms. Seeing Fitzpiers standing there she said with playful effrontery: "~~Kiss~~ May'st kiss me if ~~you can~~ 'canst catch me, Jim!"

Fitzpiers recognized her as Suke Sengreen – a boyden[illegible] damsel of the hamlet, ~~with~~ ~~[illegible]~~ who ~~had~~ plainly mistaking him for her lover. ~~for him.~~ He was ~~suddenly~~ impulsively disposed to profit by her error, & as soon as she began ~~bounding~~ racing away he started in pursuit.

Or she went under the boughs, now in light, now in shade, looking & over her shoulder at him every few moments & kissing her hand; but so cunningly dodging about among the trees & moon-shades that she never allowed him to get dangerously near her. Thus they ran & doubled, Fitzpiers warming with the chase, till the sound of their companions had quite died away. He began to lose hope of ever overtaking her when all at once, by way of encouragement, she turned to a fence in which there was a stile, ~~over which she leapt~~ and leapt over it.

Outside the scene was a changed one; a meadow, ~~which~~ where the ~~recently~~ half-made hay lay about in heaps, in the uninterrupted shine of the now high moon. [Fitzpiers saw in a moment that ~~now~~ having taken to open ground she had placed herself at his mercy, & ~~he~~ and prompt[illegible] scrambled over after her. She ~~skirted~~ flitted a little way down the mead, when all at once her light form ~~suddenly~~

disappeared, as if it had sunk into the earth. She had buried herself in one of the hay-cocks.

Fitzpiers, now thoroughly excited, was not going to let her escape him thus: he approached, & set about turning over the heaps one by one. As soon as he paused & puzzled, he was directed anew by an imitative kiss which came from her hiding-place, & by the snatches he paused, puzzled of a local ballad in the smallest voice she could assume:

"O come in from the foggy foggy dew."

In a minute or two he uncovered her.

"O — 'tis not Jim!" said she, burying her face. Fitzpiers, however, disregarded her resistance by reason of his mildness, stooped, & imprinted the purposed kiss; then sank down on the next hay-cock, panting with his race.

"What do you mean by Jim?" he asked presently.

"My young man Jim Jangs," said she.

"Now, honour bright — did you really think it was he?"

"I did at first". "But you didn't at last."

"I did not at last."

"Do you much mind that it was not he?"

"No", she answered slily.

~~There was a pause, disturbed only by the coarse & whirr of the nightjars, the time of nightingales being now past. As the moonlight strike looked very beautiful, the scratches & blemishes incidental to her field outdoor occupations being invisible. As he did not hurry to speak the declared~~

~~intent of his past Thursday night, there had continued silence between them~~

~~which was [illegible] by the thickest kiss of the modern & shamefaced~~

Chudleys

Felspiers did not pursue his questioning. In the moonlight Susie looked very beautiful, the scratches & blemishes incidental to her out-door occupation being invisible under these pale-white rays. While they remained silent the coarse whirr of the eternal night-jar sarcastically burst from the top of a tree at the nearest corner of the wood. Besides this not a sound of any kind reached their ears, the time of nightingales being now past, and Hintock lying at a distance of two miles at least. In the opposite direction the hay-field stretched away and remotenes lost to the eye in a soft mist.

It was daybreak before Felspiers & Suke Damson re-entered Little Hintock.

Chapter XXI.

When the general stampede occurred Winterborne had also been looking on, & encountering one of the girls had asked her what caused them all to fly.

She said with solemn breathlessness that they had seen something very different from what they had hoped to see, & that she for one would never attempt such unholy ceremonies again. "We saw Satan pursuing us with his hour-glass. It was terrible!"

This account being a little incoherent Giles went forward towards the spot from which the girls had retreated, & after listening there a few minutes he heard slow footsteps rustling over the leaves, & looking through a tangled screen of honeysuckle which hung from a bough he saw in the open space beyond a short stout man dressed in evening dress, carrying

$$\begin{array}{r} 154 \\ 56 \\ \hline 309 \end{array}$$

$$56 \overline{)1544} \; (26$$
$$\begin{array}{r} 112 \\ \hline 384 \\ 336 \\ \hline 48 \end{array}$$

on one arm a light overcoat & also his hat, so awkwardly arranged as possibly to have suggested the "horn-glass" to his timid observers — if this were the person whom the girls had seen. With the other hand he silently gesticulated; & the moonlight, falling upon his bare brow, showed him to have dark hair, & a high forehead of the shape seen oftener in old prints & paintings than in real life. His curious & altogether alien aspect, his strange gestures, like those of one who is rehearsing a scene himself, & the unusual place & hour, were sufficient to account for any trepidation among the Hunstock daughters at encountering him.

He paused, & looked round, as if he had forgotten where he was; not observing Giles, whose figure was the colour of his environment. The latter advanced into the light. The gentleman held up his hand & came towards Giles, the two meeting half way.

"I have lost my way," said the stranger. "Perhaps you can put me in the path again. He wiped his forehead with the air of one suffering under an agitation more than that of simple fatigue.

"The turnpike-road is over there," said Giles.

"I don't want the turnpike-road," said the gentleman impatiently. "I came from that. I want Hintock House. Is there not a path to it across here?" "Well yes, a sort of path. But it is hard to find from this point. I'll show you the way, sir, with great pleasure."

"Thanks my good friend. The truth is that I decided to walk across the country after dinner

~~the dinner~~
from the Hotel at Sherton, where I am staying for a day or two. But I did not know it was so far."

"It is about a mile to the House from here."

They walked on together. As there was no path Giles occasionally stepped in front & bent aside the under-boughs of the trees to give his companion a passage, saying every now & then when the twigs, on being released, flew back like whips, "mind your eyes Sir;" To which the stranger replied "yes," "yes" in a preoccupied tone.

So they went on, the leaf-shadows running in their usual quick succession over the forms of the pedestrians till the stranger said "Is it far?"

"Not much further" said Winterbottome. "The plantation runs up into a corner here, close behind the house. He added with hesitation: "You know, I suppose Sir, that Mrs Chermond is not at home?"

"You mistake," said the other quickly. "Mrs Chermond has been away for some time, but she's at home now."

Giles did not contradict him, though he felt sure the gentleman was wrong.

"You are a native of this place?" the stranger said.

"Yes"

"Well - You are happy in having a home. It is what I don't possess."

"You come from far, seemingly?"

"I come now from the South of Europe."

"Oh indeed sir."

~~"Yes"~~ "You are an Italian or Spanish or French gentleman, perhaps?"

"I am not either." Giles did not fill the pause which ensued & the

~~dumb to~~ unable to resist friendship, at length an-
gentleman, who seemed of an emotional nature, ~~[illegible]~~ answered the question: "I am an
estranged American, a South Carolinian by birth," he said. "I left my native country on
the failure of the Southern cause, & have never returned to it since".

He spoke no more about himself, & they came to the verge of the wood,
Here, striding over the fence out upon the upland inward, they at once could see the chimneys
of the House in the gorge immediately beneath their position; silent, still, & pale.

"Can you tell me the time?" the gentleman asked. "My watch has stopped"

"It is between twelve & one," said Giles.

His companion expressed his astonishment.

"I thought it between nine & ten at latest! Dear me!..... dear me." He now begged Giles to return; & offered him a gold coin, which looked like a sovereign, for the assistance rendered. Giles declined to accept anything, to the surprise of the stranger, who, on putting the money back into his pocket, said awkwardly, "I offered it because I want you to utter no word about this meeting with me. Will you promise?"

Winterborne promised readily. He thereupon stood still & liked the other descended the slope, at the bottom he looked back dubiously. Giles would no longer remain when he was so evidently desired to leave, & returned through the copse to Hintock House.

He suspected that this man, who seemed so distressed & melancholy, might be that lover & persistent wooer of Mrs Charmond whom he had heard so frequently spoken of, & whom it was said she had treated cavalierly. But he received no confirmation of his suspicion beyond a report which reached him a few days later, that a gentleman had called up the servants who were

taking care of Hintock House, at an hour past midnight; & on learning that Mrs Charmond, though returned from abroad, was as yet in London, he had sworn bitterly, & gone away without leaving a card or any trace of himself. The girls who related the story added that he sighed three times before he swore: but this part of the narrative was not corroborated. Any how such a gentleman had driven away from the hotel at Sherton next day in a carriage hired at that Inn.

Chapter XXII

The sunny leafy week which followed the tender doings of Midsummer Eve brought a visitor to Fitzpiers's door; the voice that he knew sounded in the passage. Mr Melbury had called. He had at first a particular objection to entering the parlour, because his boots were dusty; but as the surgeon insisted he trained the point of care in. Looking neither to the right nor to the left, hardly at Fitzpiers himself, he put his hat under his chair & with a preoccupied gaze at the floor said, "I've called to ask you, doctor, quite privately, a question that troubles me. I've a daughter, Grace, an only daughter, as you may have heard. Well, she's been out in the dew — on Midsummer Eve in particular she went out in thin slippers to watch some vagary of the Hintock maids — & she's got a cough, a distinct hemming & hacking cough, that makes me uneasy. Now I have decided to send her away to some sea-side place for a change —

"Send her away!" Fitzpiers's countenance had fallen.

"Yes. And the question is, where would you advise me to send her?"

The timber-merchant had happened to call at a moment when

Fitzpiers was at the spring-tide of a ~~feeling~~ sentiment that Grace was a necessity of his existence. The ~~headlong~~ sudden pressure of her form upon his breast as she came headlong round the bank ~~had never ceased to linger~~ had never ceased to linger with him, ever since, headspled the manœuvre for which the hour & the moonlight & the occasion had been the only excuse. Now she was to be sent away. Ambition? it could be postponed. Family? culture & ~~sympathy~~ reciprocity of tastes had taken the place of family nowadays. He allowed himself to be carried forward on the wave of his ~~feeling~~ desire.

"How strange, how very strange it is," he said, "that you should have come to me about her just now. I have been thinking every day of coming to you on the very same errand."

"Ah? — you have noticed, too, that her health —"

"I have noticed nothing the matter with her health, because there is nothing. But Mr Melbury, I have seen your daughter several times ~~very often~~ by accident. I have admired her infinitely; & I was coming to ask you if I may become better acquainted with her — pay my addresses to her."

Melbury was looking down as he listened, & did not see the fair ~~half~~ misgiving of ~~suspense~~ at his own rashness ~~temerity~~ that spread over Fitzpiers's face as he made this declaration.

"You have got to know — ~~seen~~ her?" said Melbury, a spell of dead silence having preceded his utterance, during which his emotion rose with almost visible effect. "Yes," said Fitzpiers. "And you wish to become better acquainted with her ~~pay your addresses to her~~? You mean with a view to marriage — of course that is what you mean."

"Yes," said the young man. "I mean, get acquainted with her, with a view to being her accepted lover; & if we suited each other, what would naturally follow."

The timber-dealer was much surprised, & fairly agitated; his hand trembled as he laid by his walking-stick. "This takes me unawares", said he, his voice well-nigh breaking down. "I don't mean that there is anything unexpected in the fact of a gentleman being attracted by her; but it did not occur to me that it would be you.... I always said," continued he, with a lump in his throat, "that my Grace would make a mark at her own level some day. That was why I educated her. I said to myself, 'I'll do it, cost what it may'; though her mother-law was pretty frightened at my paying out so much money year after year. I knew it would tell in the end. 'Where you're not good material to work on such doings would be waste & vanity', I said. 'But where you have that material it is sure to be worth while.'"

"I am glad you don't object," said Fitzpiers, almost wishing that Grace had not been quite so cheap to him.

If she is willing I don't object certainly. Indeed," added the honest man, it would be deceit if I were to pretend to feel anything else than highly honoured personally; & it is a great credit to her to have drawn to her a man of such good professional & venerable old family. That humble man-fellow little thought how wrong he was about her! Take her & welcome, Sir."

"I'll endeavour to ascertain her mind."

"Yes, yes. But she will be agreeable, I should think. She ought to be."

"I hope she may. Well now you'll expect to see me frequently."

"Oh yes. But ~~Yes~~ name it all — about her cough & and her going away. I had quite forgot that that was what I came about."

"I assume you" said the Surgeon "that her cough can only be the result of a slight cold, & it is not necessary to banish her to any sea-side place at all."

Melbury looked ~~for a moment~~ unconvinced, doubtful whether he ought to take Fitzpiers's professional opinion in circumstances which naturally led him to wish to keep her there. The doctor saw this, & honestly dreading to lose sight of her he said eagerly "Between ourselves, If I am successful with her I will take her away for a month or two, myself as soon as we are married, which I hope will be before the chilly weather comes on. This will be so very much better than letting her go now."

The proposal pleased Melbury much. There could be hardly any danger in postponing any desirable change of air ~~During~~ as long as warm weather lasted, & for such a reason. Suddenly recollecting himself he said "Your time must be precious, doctor. I'll get home-along. I am much obliged to ye ... as you will see her often, you'll discover for yourself if anything serious is the matter."

"I can assure you it is nothing", said Fitzpiers, who had seen Grace much oftener already than her father knew of.

When he was gone Tickpiers paused. silent, registering his sensations, like a man who has made a plunge for a pearl into a medium of which he knows not the density or temperature. But he had done it, & Grace was the sweetest girl alive. Alas for the departed visitor, his own last words lingered in Melbury's ears as he walked homeward; he felt what he had said in the emotion of the moment was very stupid, unpenitent, & unfitted to a dealings with an educated gentleman, the smallness of whose practice was more than compensated by the former keenness of his family. He had uttered thoughts before they were weighed, & almost before they were shaped. They had expressed in a certain sense his feeling at Tickpiers's news; but yet they were not right. Looking on the ground, & planting his stick at each step as if it were a flag-staff, he reached his own precincts, where, as he passed through the court, he automatically stopped to look at the men working in the shed & around. One of them asked him a question about waggon-spokes.

"Hey?" said Melbury looking hard at him. The man repeated the words.

Melbury stood; then turning suddenly away without answering he went up the court & entered the house. As time was no object with the journeymen, except as a thing to get past, they leisurely surveyed the door through which he had disappeared.

"What maggot has the gaffer got in his head now," said Jangs the elder. John Upjohn.

"Summit to do with that chick of his! When you've got a maid of yer own, John Upjohn, that costs ye what she costs him, that will take the squeak

out of your Sunday shoes, John! But you'll never be tall enough to accomplish such as she; & 'tis a lucky thing for ye, John, as things be." Well, he ought to have a dozen — that would bring him to reason. I see 'em walking ~~come to a puddle~~ together last Sunday, & he lifted her when they came to a puddle over like a halfpenny doll. He ought to have a dozen; he'd let 'em walk through puddles for themselves then."

Meanwhile Melbury had entered the house with the look of a man who sees a vision before him. His wife was in the room. Without taking off his hat he sat down ~~at~~ at random.

"Lucy — we've done it!" he said. "Yes — the thing is as I expected. The spell, that I foresaw might be worked, has worked. She's done it, & done it well. Where is she? — Grace, I mean."

"Up in her room — what has happened?"

Mr Melbury explained the ~~news~~ circumstances as coherently as he could. "I told you so," he said, "a maid like her could not long stay hid long, even in a place like this. But where is Grace? Let's have her down. Here — Gra-a-ace!"

She appeared, after a reasonable interval, for she was sufficiently spoilt by this father of hers not to put herself in a hurry, however impatient his tones. "What is it, father?" said she, with a smile.

Why, you scamp, what's this you've been doing? Not home here more than six months, yet instead of confining yourself to your father's rank making havoc in the educated classes....."

Though accustomed to show herself instantly appreciative of her father's meanings Grace was fairly unable to look anyhow but at a loss now.

"No, no — of course you don't know what I mean, or you pretend you don't. Though for my part I believe women can see these things through a double hedge. But I suppose I must tell ye. Why, you've flung your grapnel over the doctor, & he's coming coming forthwith."

"Only think of that, my dear. Don't you feel it a triumph?" said Mrs Melly.

"Coming coming — I've done nothing to make him!" Grace exclaimed.

"It was'nt necessary that you should. It's voluntary on his part that rules in these things.... Well, he has behaved very honorably, & asked my consent. You'll know what to do when he gets here, I daresay. I needn't tell you to make it all smooth for him."

"You mean, to lead him on to marry me?"

"I do. Haven't I educated you for it?"

Grace looked out of the window, & at the fireplace, with no animation in her face. "Why is it settled off-hand in this way?" said she coquettishly. "You'll wait till you hear what I think of him, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, of course. But you see what a good thing it will be."

She weighed the statement without speaking.

"I do," she returned with composure.

"You will be restored to the society you've been taken away from," continued her father, "for I don't suppose he'll stay here long."

She admitted the advantage; but

It was plain that though Felix's prizes exercised a certain fascin-

ation over her when he was present, or even more, an almost ~~[illegible]~~ psychic influence, & though his impulsive act in the wood had stirred her feelings indescribably, she had never regarded him in the light of a ~~[illegible]~~ destined husband. "I don't know what to answer," she said. "I have ~~heard~~ learnt that he is very clever".

"He's all right, & he's coming here to see you."

A premonition that she could not resist him if he came ~~made her~~ strangely moved her ~~weary~~. "Of course, father, you remember that it is only lately that Giles—"

"You know that you can't think of him. He has given up all claim to you."

She could not explain the subtleties of her feeling, as he could state his opinion, even though she had ~~plenty of~~ skill in speech, & her father had none. That Fitzpiers acted upon her like a dram, exciting her, & throwing her into a foreign novel atmosphere which biassed her doings until the influence was over, ~~she could not be told to this worthy couple in words~~ when she felt something of the nature of regret for the mood she had experienced, & still more when she reflected on ~~remembered~~ the silent, almost sarcastic, ~~reproachfulness of~~ criticism apparent in Winterbourne's air towards her, could not be told to this worthy couple in words.

It so happened that on this very day Fitzpiers was called away from Hintock ~~on some~~ by an engagement to attend ~~to~~ some ~~professional~~ medical meeting, & his visits therefore did not ~~take place~~ begin at once. A note however arrived from him addressed to Grace deploring ~~his absence~~ his enforced absence. As a material object this note was pretty & superfine, a note of a sort that she had been unaccustomed to see

since her return to Hintock, except when a school friend wrote to her — a rare instance, for the girls were ~~by~~ respecters of persons, & many cooled down towards the timber-dealers daughter when she was out of sight. Thus the receipt of it pleased her, & she afterwards walked about with a reflective air.

In the evening her father, who knew that the note had come, said "Why ~~are you~~ be ye not sitting down to answer your letter? That's what young folks did in my time."

She replied that it did not require an answer.

"Oh, you know best," he said. Nevertheless he went about his business doubting if she were right in not replying; possibly she might be so mismanaging matters as to risk the loss of an alliance which would bring her much happiness.

Melbury's ~~faith in~~ respect for Dr Fitzpiers was based less on his professional position, which was not ~~high~~ much, than on the standing of his family in the county in by-gone days. That implicit faith in ~~historical~~ members of long-established families, as such, irrespective of their personal condition or character, which is still found among old-fashioned people in the rural districts, reached its full intensity in Melbury. His daughter's suitor was descended from a family he had heard of ~~the~~ in his grandfather's time as being once great, a family which had conferred its name upon a neighbouring village; how then could anything be amiss in this betrothal.

"I must keep her up to this," he said to his wife. "She sees it is for

her happiness; but still she's young, & may want a little prompting from an older tongue."

[End of Part V.]

Chapter XXIII

With this in view he took her out for a walk, a custom of his when he wished to say anything specially impressive. Their way was over the top of that lofty ridge dividing their woodland from the cider district, whence they had in the spring beheld the miles of appletrees in bloom. All was now deep green. The spot recalled to Grace's mind the last occasion of her presence here, & she said "The promise of an enormous apple-crop is fulfilling itself, is it not? I suppose Giles is getting his mills & presses ready."

This was just what her father had not come here to talk about. Without replying he raised his arm, & moved his finger till he fixed it at a point. "There," he said, "you see that plantation reaching over the hill like a great slug, & just behind the hill a particularly green sheltered bottom? That's where Mr Fitzpiers's family were lords of the manor for I don't know how many hundred years, & there stands the village of Brecklesy Fitzpiers. A wonderful property 'twas — wonderful!"

"But they are not lords of the manor there now."

"Why no. But good & great things die as well as little & foolish. The only ones representing the family now, I believe, are one doctor & maiden lady living I don't know where.... You can't keep being happy,

Grace, in allying yourself with such a family. You'll feel as if you've stepped into his story."

"We've been at Hintock as long as they've been at Buckbury; is it not so? You say our name occurs in old deeds continually."

"Oh yes – as yeomen, copyholders & such like. But think how much better this will be for 'ee. You'll be living a blithe, romantical life, such as has now become natural to you; & though the doctor's practice is small here he'll no doubt go to a dashing town when he's got his hand in, & keep a stylish carriage, & you'll be brought to know a good many ladies of excellent society. If you should ever meet me then, Grace, you can drive past me, looking the other way. I should'nt expect you to speak to me, or wish such a thing – unless it happened to be in some lonely private place where 'twould'nt lower ye at all. – Don't think such men as neighbour Giles your equal. He & I shall be good friends enough, but he's not for the like of you. He's lived our rough & homely life here, & his wife's life must be rough & homely likewise."

So much pressure could not but produce some displacement. As Grace was left very much to herself she took advantage of one fine day before Fitzpiers's return to drive into the aforesaid vale where stood the village of Buckbury Fitzpiers. Leaving her father's man at the inn with the horse & gig she rambled onwards to the ruins of a

Castle, which stood in a field hard by. She had no doubt that it represented the ancient Fitzpiers stronghold of the Fitzpiers family.

The remains were few, & consisted mostly of remnants of the lower vaulting, supported on low stone columns surmounted by the "crochet" capital of the period. The two or three arches of these vaults that were still in position had been used by the adjoining farmer as shelter for his calves, the floor being spread with straw, amid which the young creatures rustled, cooling their thirsty tongues by licking the rude Norman carving, & which glistened with the moisture. It was a degradation of even such a rude form of art as this to be treated thus, she thought, & for the first time the family of Fitzpiers assumed in her imagination the hues of a melancholy romanticism.

It was some time before she reached home, & she traversed the distance with a preoccupied mind. The idea of so modern a man as science & aesthetics as this surgeon springing out of relics so ancient was a kind of novelty she had never before experienced. The combination lent him a social intellectual interest which she dreaded, so much weight did it add to the strange influence he exercised upon her whenever he came near her.

In an excitement which was not love, not ambition; rather a fearful consciousness of hazard in the air, she awaited his return.

Meanwhile her father was awaiting him also. In his house there was an old work on Medicine, published towards the end of the last century, for to put himself in harmony

with events ~~he~~ got Melbury spread his work on his knees when he had done his days business, & read about Galen, Hippocrates, & Herophilus; of the dogmatic, the empiric, the hermetical, & other sects of practitioners that have arisen in history; & thence proceeded to the classification of maladies & the rules for their treatment, as laid down absolutely in this valuable ~~se~~ book with absolute precision. Melbury regretted that the treatise was so old, fearing that he might in consequence ~~on that account~~ be unable to hold as complete a conversation as he could wish with Mr Fitzpiers, ~~as he could wish~~ primed, no doubt, with more recent discoveries.

The day of Fitzpiers's return arrived, & he sent to say that he would call immediately. In the little time that was afforded for putting the house in order the sweeping of Melbury's parlour was as the sweeping of the parlour at the ~~the~~ Interpreter's ~~parlour~~ which ~~is that~~ well-nigh choked the Pilgrim. ~~and~~ At the end of it Mrs Melbury sat down, folded her hands & lips, & waited. ~~Melbury~~ Her husband restlessly walked in & out from the timber-yard, stared at the interior of the room, jerked out "ay; ay," & retreated again. Between four & five Fitzpiers arrived, hitching his horse to the hook outside the door.

As soon as he had walked in & perceived that Grace was not in the room he seemed to have a misgiving. Nothing less than her actual presence could long keep him to the level of this impassioned enterprise, & that lacking he appeared as one who wished to retrace his steps.

with events ~~he~~ past Melbury spread his work on his knees when he had done his days business, & read about Galen, Hippocrates, & Herophilus; of the dogmatic, the empiric, the hermetical, & other sects of practitioners that have arisen in history; & thence proceeded to the classification of maladies & the rules for their treatment, as laid down absolutely in this valuable ~~the~~ book with absolute precision. Melbury regretted that the treatise was so old, fearing that he might in consequence ~~on that account~~ be unable to hold as complete a conversation as he could wish with Mr Fitzpiers, ~~as he could wish~~ primed, no doubt, with more recent discoveries.

The day of Fitzpiers's return arrived, & he sent to say that he would call immediately. In the little time that was afforded for putting the house in order the sweeping of Melbury's parlour was as the sweeping of the parlour at the ~~the~~ Interpreter's ~~parlour~~ which ~~is that~~ well-nigh choked the Pilgrim. ~~Good~~ At the end of it Mrs Melbury sat down, folded her hands & lips, & waited. Her husband ~~Melbury~~ restlessly walked in & out from the timber-yard, stared at the interior of the room, jerked out "ay; ay," & retreated again. Between four & five Fitzpiers arrived, hitching his horse to the hook outside the door.

As soon as he had walked in & perceived that Grace was not in the room he seemed to have a misgiving. Nothing less than her actual presence could long keep him to the level of this impassioned enterprise, & that lacking he appeared as one who wished to retrace his steps.

He mechanically looked at what he considered a woodland matron's level of thought till a rustling was heard on the stairs, & Grace came in. Fitzpiers was for once as agitated as she. Over & above the genuine emotion which she raised in his heart there hung the sense that he was casting a die by impulse which he might not have thrown by judgment.

Mr Melbury was not in the room. Having to attend to matters in the yard he had delayed putting on his afternoon coat & waistcoat till the doctor's appearance, when, not wishing to be backward in receiving him, he entered the parlour hastily buttoning up those garments. Grace's fastidious ear was a little distressed that Fitzpiers should see by this action the strain his visit was putting upon her father; & to make matters worse for her just then, old Grammer seemed to have a ~~frequent~~ passion for incessantly pumping in the back kitchen, while cleaning the doors open between so that the noise of banging & splashing above could be distinctly heard in the parlour conversation.

~~Mr Melbury spoke not~~ Whenever the chat over the tea sank into pleasant ~~indefiniteness~~ desultoriness Mr Melbury broke in with ~~a~~ laboured speeches of precision on very remote topics, as if he feared to let Fitzpiers's mind dwell critically on the subject nearest the ~~mind~~ hearts of all. In truth a constrained manner was natural enough in Melbury just now, for the greatest interest of his life was reaching its crisis. Could he read have been

beheld instead of the corporeal merely, the corner of the room in which he sate would have been filled with a form typical of anxious suspense, large-eyed, tight-lipped, awaiting the issue. That ~~the~~ hopes patient & fears so intense of a man should be bound up in the person of one child, & not have dispersed themselves so peculiarly circumstanced over the larger field of ~~subsequent days~~ a whole family, was involved dangerous risks to future happiness.

Fitzpiers did not stay more than ~~half~~ an hour, but that time had apparently ~~changed~~ advanced his sentiments towards Grace, once & for all, from a vaguely liquescent to an organic shape. She would not have accompanied him to the door, in response to his whispered "come!" if ~~he~~ her mother had not said in a matter of fact way, "Of course, Grace; go to the door with Mr Fitzpiers." Accordingly Grace went, both her parents remaining in the room. When the young pair were in the great brick-floored hall the lover took the girl's hand in his, drew it under his arm, & thus led her on to the front door, where he ~~suddenly~~ stealthily kissed her.

She broke from him trembling, blushed, & turned aside, hardly knowing how things had advanced to this. Fitzpiers drove off, kissing his hand to her, & waving it to Melbury, who was visible through the window. Her father returned the surgeon's ~~last~~ action with a great flourish of his own hand, and a satisfied smile

The intoxication that Fitzpiers had ~~produced~~ as usual produced in Grace's brain

during the visit passed off somewhat with his withdrawal. She felt like a woman who did not know what she had been doing for the previous hour; but supposed with trepidation that the afternoon's proceedings, though vague, had amounted to an engagement between herself and ~~Fitz~~ the handsome, ~~Habsburg~~ coercive, irresistible Fitzpiers.

While time Hardies.

This visit was a type of many which followed it during those long summer days of that year. Grace was borne along upon a stream of reasonings, arguments, persuasions, supplemented, it must be added, by inclinations of her own at times. No woman is without ~~ambition~~ aspirations, which may be innocent enough within certain limits; & Grace had been so trained socially & educated intellectually, as to see clearly enough a pleasure in the position of wife of such a man as Fitzpiers. His standing ~~at present had~~ material ~~position~~ ~~of life~~ of ~~himself~~ itself, either present or future, had little ~~nothing to do~~ with her ambition, but the possibilities of ~~and her future were great in her view~~ a refined & cultivated inner life, of subtle psychological intercourse, had their charm. It was this rather than any vulgar idea of marrying well which caused her to float with the current, & to yield to the immense influence which Fitzpiers exercised over her whenever she ~~he~~ shared his society.

Any observer would shrewdly have prophesied, not whether or not she loved ~~Fitz~~ him as yet in the ordinary sense, she was pretty sure to do so in time.

One evening just before dusk they had taken a rather long walk together, & for a short-cut homeward passed through the shrubberies of Hintock House — still deserted, & still blankly confronting with its shuttered windows & slopes the surrounding foliage. Grace was tired, & they approached the wall, & sat together on one of the stone sills — still warm from the sun that had been pouring its rays upon them all the afternoon.

"This place would just do for us, would it not, dearest," said her husband, as they sat turning their backs & looking idly at the old façade.

"Oh yes," said Grace, plainly showing that no such fancy had ever crossed her mind. "She is away from home still," Grace added in a minute, rather sadly, for she could not forget that she had somehow lost the valuable friendship of Mrs Charmond the lady of this house.

"Who is? — oh, you mean Mrs Charmond. Do you know, dear, that at one time I thought you lived here."

"Indeed?" said Grace. "How was that?"

He explained, as far as he could, do so without mentioning his disappointment at finding it was Marnhill; & then went on: "Well, never mind that. Now I want to ask you something. There is one detail of our wedding which I am sure you will leave to me. My inclination is not to be married at the horrid little chapel here, with all the yokels staring round at us, & a droning parson reading."

"Where then can it be? At a church in town?"

No. Not at a church at all. At a registry office. It is a quieter, snugger, & more convenient place in every way."

"Oh," said she with real distress. "How can I be married except at church & with all my dear friends round me!"

"Ycoman Winterborne among them."

"Yes – why not. You know there was nothing serious between him & me."

"You see, dear, a noisy bell-ringing marriage at church has this objection in our case; it would be a thing of report a long way round. Now I would gently, as gently as possible, indicate to you how disadvisable such publicity would be if we leave Hintock, & I purchase the practice that I contemplate purchasing at Budmouth – handy more than twenty miles off. Forgive my saying that it will be far better if nobody there knows where you come from, nor anything about your parents. Your beauty & knowledge & manners will carry you anywhere if you are not hampered by such retrospective criticism."

"But it could be a quiet ceremony, it not even at church", she pleaded.

"I don't see the necessity of any going there!" he said a little impatiently. "Marriage is a civil contract, & the shorter & simpler it is made the better. People don't go to church when they take a house, or even when they make a will."

Oh Edgar — I don't like to hear you speak like that!"

"Well, well – I did not mean to. But I have mentioned as much to your father, who has made no objection; & why should you?"

She gave way, deeming the point one on which she ought to allow sentiment to give way to policy – if there were indeed policy in his plan. But she was indefinably depressed as they walked homeward.

[End of Part V.]

Chapter XXIV.

He left her at the door of her father's house. As he receded ~~to the distance~~ out of sight & was clasped by the filmy shades, ~~she looked like~~ impressed & Grace felt as [a man who hardly appertained to her existence at all. Cleverer, greater than herself, one outside her mental portals as she considered him, he seemed to be her ruler rather than her equal, protector, & dear familiar friend.

The disappointment she had experienced at his visit, the shock given to her girlish sensibilities by his irreverent views of marriage, together with the sure & near approach of the day fixed for committing her future to his keeping, made her ~~wedding to make her~~ so restless ~~that night~~ that she could scarcely that night. sleep at all. She rose when the sparrows began to walk out of the roof-holes, sat on the floor of her room, & by & by peeped out behind the in the dim light, window curtains. It was even now day out-of-doors, though the tones of morning were feeble & wan, & it was long before the sun would be perceptible in his over-shadowed vale. Not a sound came from any of the outhouses as yet. The tree-trunks, the road, the outbuildings, the garden, every object, were ~~cataleptic~~ in that aspect of ~~meditative~~ mesmeric ~~windless breezeless~~ suspensive stillness which the quietest of day-break lends to such scenes. Outside her window she seemed to be ~~these seemed~~ immovably combined with [intense consciousness; a ~~wretched~~ meditative inertness, possessed all things, oppressively contrasting with her own active emotions. Beyond the road were some cottage-roofs & orchards; over these roofs, & over the apple-trees behind, high up the slope, backed by the ~~wood~~ plantation on the crest, was the house yet occupied by her future husband, the rough-cast front showing whitely through ~~behind~~ its creepers.

The window-shutters were closed, the bedroom curtains closely drawn, & not the thinnest coil of smoke rose from the ragged chimneys.

Something broke the stillness. The front door of the house she was gazing at opened softly, & there came out on the porch a female figure, wrapped in a large shawl, beneath which was visible the white skirt of a long loose garment. A grey arm, stretching from within the porch, adjusted the shawl over the woman's shoulders; it was withdrawn & disappeared, the door closing behind her.

The woman went quickly down the box-edged path between the raspberries & currants, & as she walked her well-developed form & gait betrayed her individuality. It was Suke Damson, the affianced one-time of simple young Jim Jangs. At the bottom of the garden she entered the shelter of the tall hedge, & only the top of her head could be seen hastening in the direction of her own dwelling.

Grace had recognised, or thought she recognised, in the grey arm stretching from the porch, the sleeve of a dressing-gown worn by Mr. Fitzpiers had been wearing on her own momentous visit to him. Her face fired red. She had just before thought of dressing herself & taking a lonely walk under the trees, so coolly green this early morning; but she now sat down on her bed, to tell out her reverie. It seemed as if hardly any time had passed when she heard the household moving briskly about.

breakfast preparing downstairs; though on rousing herself to dress robe & descend she found that the sun was throwing his rays completely over the tree-tops, a progress of natural phenomena denoting that at least 3 hours had elapsed since she last looked out of the window.

When attired she broke search about the house for her father; she found him at last stooping to in the garden, examining the potatoes for signs of disease. Hearing her rustle he stood up & stretched his back & arms, saying "Morning t'ye, Gracie. I congratulate ye. It is only a month to-day to the time!"

She did not answer, but, without lifting her dress, waded between the dewy rows of tall potato-tops green into the middle of the plot where he was.

"I have been thinking very much about my position this morning, ever since it was light," she began excitedly & tremblingly so that she could hardly stand. "And I feel it is a false one. I wish not to marry Mr Fitzpiers. I wish not to marry anybody; but I'll marry Giles Winterborne if you say I must as an alternative."

Her father's face settled into rigidity, he turned pale, & came deliberately out of the plot before him. he answered. She had never seen him look so incensed before.

"Now, hearken to me," he said. "There's a time for a woman to alter her mind; & there's a time when she can no longer alter it. it. if she has any right eye to her parents honour & the seemliness of things. That time has come. I won't say to ye, you shall marry him. But I will say that if you refuse I shall for ever be

ashamed of (a) weary of you as a daughter, & shall look upon you as the hope of my life no more. What do you know about life & what it can bring forth, & how you ought to act to lead up to best ends? Oh, you are an ungrateful maid, Grace: you've seen that fellow Giles, & he has got over ye; that's where the secret lies, I'll warrant me!"

~~You encouraged him~~ "Oh father, no! It is not Giles — it is something I cannot tell you of —"

"Well — make fools of us all; make us laughing-stocks; break it off; have your own way!"

"But who knows of the engagement as yet — how can I be disgrace you?" breaking

Melbury then by degrees admitted that he had mentioned the engagement to his acquaintance and to that, till she perceived that in his restlessness & pride he had published it everywhere. She went away dismally. & a corner of camel at the top of the garden. Her father followed her. ["It is that Giles Winterborne!" he said looking with an upbraiding gaze at her.

"No — it is not — though I for that matter you encouraged him once!" she said, troubled to the verge of despair. "It is not Giles: it is Mr Fitzpiers."

"You've had a tiff — a lovers' tiff — that's all, I suppose?"

"It is some woman —"

ay, ay; — The old story. Don't tell me.

"You are jealous. Now do you bide here. I'll send Fitzpiers to you. I saw him smoking in front of this house but a minute bygone".

He went off hastily out of the garden-gate, & down the lane. But she would not stay where she was; &

edging through a slit in the garden fence walked away into the wood. Just about – large and. Here the trees were wide apart, & there was no undergrowth, so that she could be seen (a sylph-like greenish-white creature, as toned by the sunlight & leafage.) some distance. She heard a crushing of leaves behind her, & found Fitzpiers reconnoitred approached her. Here she was taken by the surgeon himself, (footfall) (dear) appreciating gay & fresh as the morning around them.

His remote gaze at her had been one of mild interest rather than of rapture. But she looked so lovely in the green world about her; her pink cheeks, her simple light dress, & the delicate flexibility of her movement acquired such rarity from their wild wood setting, that his eyes kindled as he drew near.

"My darling, what – is it? Your father says you are in the sprouts, & jealous, and I don't know what. Ha-ha-ha, as if there were any rival except vegetable nature to you (in this good home of recluses!) [illegible]. We know better."

"Jealous – O no – it is not so," said she gravely. "That's a mistake of his & yours sir. I spoke to him so closely seriously about the question of marriage with you that he did not apprehend my state of mind."

"But there's something wrong – eh?" he asked, eyeing her narrowly, & bending to kiss her. She shrank away, this purposed kiss miscarried. "What is it?" he said, more seriously tiredly for this little defeat.

She made no answer beyond "Mr Fitzpiers – I have had no breakfast – I must go in."

"Come! I say!" he insisted, fixing his eyes upon her. "Tell me at once, I say!"

He was the greater strength against the less; but she was mastered less by his manner & look than by her own sense of the unfairness of silence. "I looked out of the window – thought somebody – leave your house –" she stammered.

said with hesitation
~~stammered~~. "I'll tell you by-by. I have had no breakfast — I must go indoors."

By a sort of divination her conjecture went straight to the fact. "Nor I," said lightly he. "Indeed, I rose late to-day — I have had a broken night, or rather morning. A girl — I don't know her name — rang at my bell as soon as it was light — between four & five I should think it was — perfectly maddened with an aching tooth. As nobody heard her ring she rang & rang, & she heard her & I slipped on my dressing-gown & threw some gravel at my window till at last I went down. The poor thing begged me with tears in her eyes to take out her tormentor, if I dragged her head off. Down she sat & out it came, a lovely molar — not a speck upon it; & off she went with it in her hand thereby much contented, though it would have done good work for her for fifty years to come."

It was all so plausible — so completely explained! Knowing nothing of the incident in the wood on old Mrs Summers one Grace felt that her suspicions were unjustly & absurd; and with readiness of an honest heart she jumped at the opportunity of honouring his word.

At the moment of her mental libration about the garden he bushes moved, & her father into the shady glade emerged. "Well — I hope it is made up?" he said cheerily as he came up.

"Oh yes," said Fitzpiers with his eyes fixed on Grace, whose eyes were shyly bent downward.

"Now," said her father, "tell me, the pair of ye, that you mean to take still one another for good & all; & on the strength o't you shall have another

∴ somewhat composed both by Fitzpiers's ingenious explanation & by the sense that she was not to be deprived of a religious ceremony.

couple of hundred paid down — I swear it by the name!"

Fitzpiers took her hand. "We declare it, do we not, my dear Grace?" said he. Relieved of her doubt, Disbashed, somewhat overawed, & even anxious to please, she was disposed to settle the matter; yet, woman-like, she would not relinquish her opportunity of asking a concession of some sort- "If our wedding can be at church, I say yes," she answered in a restrained voice. "If not, I say no."

Fitzpiers was generous in his turn. "It shall be so," he rejoined.

To holy church we'll go, & much good may it do us. Gracefully. They returned through the bushes indoors, Grace walking, full of many fancies, between the other two: "So let it be"; she said to herself: "Pray God it is for the best!"

From this hour there was no serious attempt at recalcitration on her part. Fitzpiers kept himself continually near her, dominating any rebellious impulse, & shaping her will into passive consonance with all his desires. Apart from his lover-like anxiety to possess her the few golden hundreds of the timber-dealer, ready to hand, formed a warm background to Grace's lovely face, & went some way to remove his patrician uneasiness at the prospect of endangering his social chances by an alliance with the family of a simple countryman.

White line

The interim closed up its perspective surely and silently. Whether Grace ever heard any doubts of other position the sense of contracting time at other moments she was comparatively blithe, was like a shortening chamber: one or two Day after day waxed drawn; the woodmen who sawed, shaped, spoke=

at this inactive season time of their year,
shaved, on her father's premises regularly came to unlock the
doors in the morning, locked them in the evening, supped, leant
over their garden-gates for a whiff of evening air, & to catch any
last & faintest throb wave of news from the outer world, which entered and
expired at Little Hintock like the exhausted swell of some sea in a wave.
some innermost creek canem of some innermost creek of an inland embayed sea; yet
no news interfered with the nuptial purpose at their neighbour's house.
The sappy green twig-tips of the season's growth would not, she thought,
be appreciably woodier on the day she became a wife, so near was
the time; the tints of the foliage would hardly have changed. Every-
thing was so much as usual that no itinerant stranger would
have supposed a woman's fate to be hanging in the balance at that
summer's decline.

But there were preparations, imaginable readily enough by those who had special
knowledge. In the remote & fashionable town of Sandbourne something was
growing up under the hands of several persons who had never seen
Grace Melbury, never would see her, or care anything about her at
all, though their creation had cruel interesting relation to her life that
it would enclose her very heart at a moment when that heart would
beat if not with more emotional ardour, at least with more emotional
turbulence than at any previous time.

Why did Mrs Dollery's van, instead of passing along at the end of
the smaller village to Great Hintock direct, turn one Saturday night

into Little Hintock lane, & never pull up till it reached Mr. Melbury's gates? The gilding ~~rays~~ shine of evening fell upon a large flat box, not less than a yard square & safely tied with cord, as it was handed out from under the tilt, with a great deal of care. But it was not heavy for its size; Mrs Dollery herself carried it into the house. Jim Jangs, the hollow-turner, Bawtree, Luke Dawson, & others, looked & knowing & made remarks to each another as they watched its entrance. Melbury stood at the door of the timber-shed in the attitude of a man to whom such an arrival was a trifling & domestic detail with which he did not condescend to be concerned. Yet he had divined the contents of that box, & was in truth all the while in a pleasant exultation at the proof that in this thus far at any rate no disappointment had supervened. While (which was rather long, from her sense of the importance of her errand) Mrs Dollery remained & he went into the outhouse; but as soon as she had had her say & had grumbled away, he entered the dwelling, to find there what he knew he should find - his wife & daughter in a flutter of excitement over the wedding-gown, just arrived from the leading dressmaker of Sandbourne watering-place aforesaid.

During these weeks Giles Winterborne was nowhere to be seen or heard of. At the close of his tenure in Hintock he had sold some of his furniture, packed up the rest - a few pieces endeared by or necessary to his occupation associations - in the house of a friendly neighbour, & gone away. People said that a certain lassitude had crept into his life; that he had never gone near a Church lately & had been seen sometimes on Sundays with unbleached boots, lying on his elbow & stomach under

with a cynical gaze at surrounding objects.
a tree, ~~taking his bearings~~. He was likely to return to Hintock when the cider-
his apparatus being stored there,
making season came round, to travel with his mill & press from village
to village.

The manor interval (diminished yet that stood before the day) There
was in Grace's mind sometimes a certain anticipative satisfaction, the satisfaction
of feeling that she would be the heroine of an hour; moreover she was
proud, as a cultivated woman, to be the wife of a cultivated man.
It was an opportunity ※
But what an attenuation was this cold pride of
the dream of her youth, in which she had pictured
(flushed by the purple light & the bloom of her own passion)
herself walking in state towards the altar without a single misgiving
as to the sealing of this bond, & fervently
receiving ~~as to her future~~ & calmly ~~receiving~~ as her due

"The homage of a thousand hearts; the fond deep love of one."

Everything had been clear then, in imagination; now something was undefined. She had
little carking anxieties; a curious fitfulness seemed to rule her, & she experienced a mournful want of someone to confide in.

The day loomed so big & nigh that her prophetic ear could in fancy catch the
noise of it, hear the murmur of the villagers as the cement of
church, imagine the thin jangle of the three thin-toned Hintock bells. The dialogues
seemed to grow louder, & the ding-ding-dong of those three crazed bells more persistent. She
awoke: ~~It was the day~~. The morning had come.

Five hours later she was the wife of Fitzpiers.

※ denied ~~to the many~~ of the ~~increasing~~ two frequently to ~~number of~~ young women in her position, not a
few in nowadays these days; those whom ~~the~~ in parental discovery of the value of education has
implanted tastes which the parental circles fail to gratify.

Chapter XXV

The chief hotel at Sherton-Abbas was an old stone-fronted inn with a yawning arch, under which vehicles were driven by stooping coachmen to back premises of wonderful commodiousness. The windows of the street were mullioned and narrow lights, & only commanded a view of the opposite houses; hence perhaps it arose that the best & most luxurious private sitting-room that the inn could afford overlooked the nether parts of the establishment, where beyond the yard were to be seen gardens & orchards, now bossed, nay encrusted, with scarlet & gold fruit, stretching to infinite distance under a luminous lavender-tinted mist.

In this room sat the one who had been the maiden Grace Melbury till the finger of fate touched her & turned her to a wife. ~~and to very good effect.~~ It was two months after the wedding, & she was alone. Fitzpiers had walked out to see the Abbey by the light of sunset, but she had been too fatigued to accompany him. They had reached the last stage of a long eight-weeks' tour, & were going on to Hintock that night.

The time was early autumn,
When the fair apples, red as evening sky,
Do bend the tree unto the fruitful ground,
When juicy pears, & berries of black dye
Do dance in air, & call the eyes around.

The landscape composing the window might indeed have been part of the identical stretch of country which the youthful Chatterton had in his mind.

In the yard between Grace & the orchards there progressed a scene natural to the locality at this time of the year. An apple-mill & press had been erected on the spot, to which some men were bringing fruit from divers points in mawn-baskets, while others were grinding them, & others wringing down the pomace, whose

the sweet juice gushed forth into tubs & pails. The superintendent man of these proceedings, to whom the others spoke as master, was a young yeoman of prepossessing figure manner & aspect, whose form she recognised in a moment. He had hung his coat to a nail of the outhouse wall, & wore his shirt-sleeves rolled up beyond his elbows, to keep them unstained while he rammed the pomace into the bags of horsehair. apple-rind & fruit apple-rind & fragments of pulp & of apple-rind, had alighted upon the brim of his hat, while brown pips of the same fruit were flocking among down upon his fine round arms.

She realized in a moment how he had come there. Down in the heart of the apple country nearly every farmer kept up a cider-making apparatus & wring-house for his own use; building up the pomace in great straw "cheeses" as they were called, but here, on the margin of Pomona's plain, where there was a in the debateable land neither orchard nor sylvan exclusively, where the apple-produce was hardly sufficient to warrant each proprietor in keeping a mill of his own. This was the field of the travelling cider-maker. His press & mill were fixed on wheels instead of being set up in a cider-house; & with a couple of horses, trucks, tubs, strainers, & an assistant or two, he wandered from place to place, deriving very satisfactory returns for his trouble in such a prolific as the present season lasted.

The back parts of the town were just now abounding with apple-heaps. gatherings, baskets, & loose heaps; & the blue stagnant air of autumn which was hung over everything was heavy with that peculiar smell a sweet cidery smell. Cakes of pomace lay against the walls in the yellow sun, where they were drying to be used as fuel. Yet it was not the great make of the year season except; before the standard crop came

accumulated
in there ~~were~~ in abundant times like this a large superfluity of early
windfalls trees of long
apples, ~~&~~ / ~~fallings~~ from the later harvest, which would not keep. Thus
Specimens of mixed dates, including the mellow countenances of
in the baskets, ~~&~~ quivering in the hopper of the mill, she saw Sheaked-
jacks, codlins, costards, stubbards, ratheripes, & other well-known friends
of her ravenous youth.

Grace watched the head ~~maker~~ man with interest. The slightest sigh es-
caped her. Perhaps she thought of the day – not so far distant – when that friend
of her childhood had ~~&~~ met her / in his own town, by her father's arrangement. warm with
~~both~~ / hope, more
diffident, & trusting in a promise rather implied than given. Or she
might have thought of days earlier yet / when her mouth was ~~as~~ ready
—days of childhood almost— somewhat more
to receive a kiss from his than / this to bestow ~~at~~. However all that
was one. one.
was over. She had felt superior to him then, & she felt superior to
him now.

~~In moving about~~ She wondered why he never looked towards her open
window. ~~But the fact was that~~ She did not know that in there the slight
commotion caused by their arrival at the inn that afternoon Winterborne had
caught sight of her through the archway, / had turned red, / was continued by
~~& proceeded~~ / his work with ~~more~~ closer attention for the / on that very account. Robert
more concentrated
Creedle too, who travelled with files, had been incidentally informed by
the ostler that Dr. Fitzpiers's young wife was in the hotel; after which
news Creedle kept / saying to himself "Ah!" / between his thrusts at
shaking his head & very audibly,
the screw of the ~~waring~~ cider-press. ¶ "Why / do you sigh like that Robert?" asked Win-
the deuce
terborne at last.

"Ah, maister — 'tis my thoughts! Aye, 'tis my thoughts! ... Ye've lost a hundred load o' timber well seasoned; ye've lost five hundred pound in good money; ye've lost the stone-wondered house that's big enough to hold a dozen families; ye've lost your share of half-a-doze good wellcows & their horses: — all lost — through your letting slip she that was once yer own!"

"Good God, Creeole, you'll drive me mad (said Giles sternly). I don't speak of that any more!"

Thus the subject had ended in the yard. The passive cause of all this loss the lady of the sad luck.

Meanwhile she still regarded the scene. She was beautifully dressed; she was seated in the most comfortable room that the inn afforded; her long journey had been full of variety, & almost luxuriously performed — for Fitzpiers did not study economy where pleasure was in question. Hence it perhaps arose that Giles & all his belongings seemed sorry & common — to her for the moment — moving in a plane so far removed from her own of late that she could scarce believe that she had ever found congruity therein. "No — I could never have married him!" she said, gently shaking her head. "Dear father was right. It would have been too coarse a life for me." And she looked at the rings of sapphire & opal upon her white & slender fingers that had been gifts from Fitzpiers.

Seeing that Giles still kept his back turned, & with a little of the above-described pride of life — easily to be understood, & possibly excused, in a young inexperienced woman who thought she had married well — she said at last, with a smile on her lips "Mr Winterborne!"

He appeared to take no heed, & she said a second time, "Mr Winterborne!" Even now he seemed not to hear, though a person close enough to him to see the slightest motion of his face might have doubted it; & she said a third time, with a timid loudness, "Mr Winterborne! What, have you forgotten me? my voice?" She remained with her lips parted in a welcoming smile.

He turned without surprise, & came deliberately towards the window. "Why do you call me?" he said with a sternness that took her completely unaware, his face being now pale. "Is it not enough that you see me here moiling & muddling for my daily bread while you are sitting there in your success, that you can't refrain from opening old wounds by calling out my name?"

She flushed, & was struck dumb for some moments; but she forgave his unreasoning anger, knowing so well in what it had its root. "I am sorry I offended you by speaking," she replied meekly. "Believe me, I did not intend to do that. I could hardly sit here so near you without a word of recognition".

Winterborne's heart had swollen big & his eyes grown moist by this time, so much had the gentle answer of that familiar voice moved him. He assured her hurriedly, & without looking at her, that he was not angry. He then managed to ask her, in a clumsy constrained way, if she had had a pleasant journey, & seen many interesting sights. She spoke of a few places that she had visited, & so the time passed till he withdrew to take his place at one of the levers which pulled round the screw.

Forgotten her voice! Indeed he had not forgotten her voice, as his

bitterness showed. But though in the heat of the moment he had reproached her keenly, his second mood was a far more tender one ~~pressed by a contemporary poet~~ — that which could regard her renunciation of such as he as her glory other privilege, his own fidelity notwithstanding: He could have declared with a contemporary poet:

If I forget,
The salt creek may forget the ocean;
If I forget
The heart whence flows my heart's bright motion.
May I sink meanlier than the worst,
Abandoned, outcast, crushed, accurst, —
If I forget!

Though you forget,
No word of mine shall mar your pleasure;
Though you forget, —
You filled my barren life with treasure,
You may withdraw the gift you gave,
You still are queen, I still am slave,
Though you forget.

She had tears in her eyes at the thought that she could not remind him of what he ought to have remembered; that not herself but the pressure of Grace was thus events had dissipated the dreams of their early youth. She had unexpectedly worsted in her rencounter with her old friend. She had opened the window with a faint sense of triumph, but he had turned it into sad; she did not quite comprehend the reason why. In truth it was because

she was not cruel enough in her cruelty. If you have to use the knife, use it, say the great surgeons; & for her own peace Grace should have condemned Winterborne thoroughly or not at all. As it was, an indescribable – some might have said dangerous – pity quavered in her bosom for him.

Presently her husband entered the room, & told her what a wonderful sunset there was to be seen. ["I have not noticed it. But out there I have seen somebody that we know," she replied, looking into the court.

Fitzpiers followed the direction of her eyes, & said he did not recognise anybody.

"Why, Mr Winterborne – there he is cider-making. He combines that with his other business, you know."

"Oh – that fellow", said Fitzpiers his curiosity becoming extinct.

She, reproachfully; "What, call Mr Winterborne a fellow, Edgar? It is true I was just saying to myself that I never could have married him; but I have regard for him, & always shall."

"Well, do by all means, my dear one. I dare say I am inhuman, and superciliously & contemptibly proud of my poor old ramshackle family; but to the honest I do honestly confess to you that I feel as if I belonged to a different species from the people who are working in that yard."

"And from me too then. For my blood is no better than theirs."

He looked at her with a droll sort of awakening. It was, indeed, a

this woman of the tribe without
startling anomaly that she should be standing there beside him as his
wife, if his sentiments were as he had said. In their travels together she
had ranged unerringly so aptly at his level in ideas, tastes, & habits, that he had
almost forgotten how his heart had played havoc with his principles in
taking her to him.

"Ah you —
"You are refined & educated into something quite different," he said, self-assuringly.
"I don't quite like to think that," she murmured wish soft regret. "And I think
you under-estimate Giles Winterborne him. Remember I was brought up with him till I was
sent away to school. So I cannot be at all radically different. At any
rate I don't feel so. That is no doubt my fault, & a great blemish in me.
But I hope you will put up with it, Edgar."

Fitzpiers said that he would endeavour to do so, & as it was now
getting on for dusk they prepared to perform the last stage of their
journey, so as to arrive at Hintock before it grew very late.

In less than half-an-hour they started, the cidermakers in the
yard having ceased their labours & gone away, so that the only sounds audible here
were the trickling of the juice from the tightly screwed press, & the buzz
of a single wasp, which had drunk itself so tipsy that it was unconscious of nightfall.
Grace was very cheerful at the thought of being soon in her sylvan home; but
Fitzpiers sat beside her almost silent. An indescribable oppressiveness
had overtaken him with the near approach of the journey's end &
the realities of life that lay there.

"You don't say a word, Edgar," she observed. "Aren't you glad to get
back? I am."

"You have friends here. I have none."

"But my friends are yours."

"Oh yes - in that sense."

The conversation languished, & they drew near the end of Hintock Lane ~~her father's house~~. It had been decided that they should, at least for a time, take up their abode in her father's roomy house, one wing of which was quite at their service, being almost disused by the Melburys. Workmen had been painting & papering, & white-washing this set of rooms in the ~~couple's~~ wedded pair's absence; & so scrupulous had been the timber-dealer that there should ~~be~~ occur no hitch or disappointment on their arrival that not the smallest detail remained undone. To make it all complete a ground-floor room had been fitted up as a surgery, with an independent outer door, & a brass plate was screwed for mere ornament, such a sign being quite superfluous where everybody ~~knew~~ the latitude & ~~to what~~ longitude of his neighbours ~~about about the spot~~ for miles round.

Melbury & his wife welcomed ~~them~~ the twain with affection, & all the house with deference. They went up to explore their rooms, that ~~about~~ opened from a passage on the left hand of the staircase, the entrance to which could be shut off on the landing by a door that Melbury had hung for the purpose. A friendly fire was burning in the grate, although it was not cold. Fitzpiers said it was too soon for any sort of meal. They only having dined shortly before leaving Sherton-Abbas; he would walk across to his old lodgings to learn how his locum-tenens had got on in his absence.

In leaving Melbury's door he looked back at the house. There was economy in living under that roof – & economy was desirable; but in some way he was dissatisfied with the arrangement; it immersed him so deeply in son-in-law-ship to Melbury. He went on to his former residence; his deputy was out, & Dr Fitzpiers fell into conversation with his former landlady (Mrs Cox). (best)

"Well; what's the news?" he asked of her presently with cheery weariness.

She was a little sorred at losing, by his marriage, so profitable a tenant as the surgeon had proved to be during his residence under her roof; & the more so in there being hardly the remotest chance of her getting such another settler for the Hintock solitudes. "'Tis what I don't wish to repeat, sir; least of all to you," she mumbled.

"Never mind me, Mrs Cox; go ahead."

"It is what people say about your hasty marrying, Dr Fitzpiers. Whereas they won't believe you know such a clever doctrines in physic as they once supposed, seeing that you could marry into Mr Melbury's family, which is only Hintock-born such as me."

"They are kindly welcome to their opinion," said Dr Fitzpiers, not allowing himself to recognize that he winced. "Anything else?"

"Yes; Miss Charmond she's come home at last."

"Who is she?"

"Mrs Charmond."

"Oh," said Fitzpiers with but slight interest. "I've never seen her."

"She has seen you, sir, whether or no."

"Never?"

"Yes. She saw you in hotel or street for a minute or two whilst you were away travelling, & accidentally heard your name; & when she made some remark about you, Miss Ellis Jammes – that's her maid – told her

you was on your wedding tower with Mrs Melbury's daughter; & she said, "He ought to have done better than that. I fear he has spoilt his chances," she says.

Fitzpiers did not talk much longer to this cheering housemaid, & walked home with no very brisk step. He entered the door quietly, & went straight upstairs to the drawing-room extemporized for his use by Melbury in his bride's absence, expecting to find her there as he had left her. The fire was burning still, but there were no lights; & looking he into the next apartment, fitted up as a little dining-room, but no supper was laid. He went to the top of the stairs, & heard a chorus of voices downstairs in the timber-merchant's parlour below, Grace's being occasionally intermingled

Descending & looking into the room from the doorway he found quite a large gathering of neighbours & their acquaintances, praising & congratulating Mrs Fitzpiers on her return, among them being the dairyman, & Farmer Bawtree, & the master blacksmith, from Great Hintock; also the cooper, the hollow-turner, the excise man, & some others, with their wives, who lived handy. Grace – girl that she was – had quite forgotten her new dignity, her husband's; she was in the midst of them blushing & receiving their compliments with all the pleasure of old comradeship.

Fitzpiers stood as though he did not much appreciate. looked interlocutorily compared by the situation. Melbury was experienced a profound distaste for nowhere in the room, but Melbury's Suke, perceiving the doctor, came to him. "We thought, Grace & I," she said, "that as they have called, hearing you were home, we could do no less than ask them to supper; & then

∴ At one moment he would ~~feel~~ mentally put an indignant query ~~as to~~ why Mrs Charnwood or any other woman should make it her business to have opinions about his opportunities; at another he thought that he could hardly be angry with her for taking an interest in the doctor of her own parish.

Grace proposed that we should all sup together as it is the first night of your return."

By this time Grace had come round to him. "Is it not good of them to welcome me so warmly!" she exclaimed with tears of friendship in her eyes "after so much good feeling I could not think of our shutting ourselves up away from them in our own dining-room."

"Certainly not - certainly not," said Fitzpiers. And he entered the room with the heroic smile of a martyr.

As soon as they had sat down to table Melbury came in, & seemed to see at once that Fitzpiers would much rather have received no such demonstrative reception. He thereupon privately chid his wife for her forwardness in the matter. Mrs Melbury declared that it was as much Grace's doing as hers & after which there was no more to be said by that young woman's tenderfoot. By this time Fitzpiers was making the best of his position among the wide-elbowed & genial company who sat eating drinking & laughing & joking around him, getting warmed himself by the good cheer & was obliged to admit after all that the supper was not the least enjoyable he had ever known.

At times, however, the words (about his having spoilt his opportunities) repeated to him as those of Mrs Charmond, haunted him like a handwriting on the wall. Then his manner would become suddenly abstracted, & Then he would drink a glass of grog & so get rid of the misgiving. These hitches & quaffings were soon perceived by Grace as well as by her father; & these both of them were much relieved when the first of

the guests discover that the hour was growing late rose & declared that he must think of moving homewards. At the words Melbury Fitzpiers rose as alertly as if lifted by a spring; & in ten minutes they were gone.

"Now Grace," said her husband as soon as he found himself alone with her in their private apartments; "we've had a very pleasant evening, & everybody has been very kind. But we must come to an understanding about our way of living here. If we continue in these rooms there must be no mixing in with your people below. I can't stand it, & that's the truth, ~~dear~~."

She had been sadly surprised at the suddenness of his distaste for those old-fashioned woodland forms of life which in his courtship he had professed to regard with so much interest. But she assented in a moment.

"We must be simply your father's tenants" he continued, "& our comings & comings must be as independent as if we lived elsewhere".

- Certainly Edgar - I quite see that it must be so."

"But you joined in with all those people in my absence, without knowing whether I should approve or disapprove. When I came I couldn't help myself at all."

She, sighing: "Yes - ~~I did~~ I see I ought to have waited; though they came unexpectedly, & I thought I had acted for the best."

Thus the discussion ended, & the next day Fitzpiers went on his old rounds as usual. But it was easy for so supersubtle an eye as his

to discern, or to think he discerned, that he was no longer regarded as an extrinsic, ~~[illegible]~~ unfathomed gentleman of ~~limited~~ less potentiality, scientific and social; but as Melbury's compeer, & therefore in a degree only one of themselves. The Hintock woodlanders held with all the strength of inherited conviction to the aristocratic principle, ~~[illegible]~~ and as soon as and they discovered had ascended that Fitzpiers was one of the old Buckbury Fitzpiers they had accorded to him for nothing a touching of hats, brims promptness of service, & deference of approach, which Melbury had to do without more he paid for it over & over. But now, having proved a traitor to his own cause by his marriage, Fitzpiers was believed in ~~[illegible]~~ no more as a ~~[illegible]~~ superior hedged by his own divinity; while as doctor he began to be rated no higher than old Jones whom they had so long despised.

His new patients ~~[illegible]~~ seemed in his two months' absence to have dwindled considerably in number; and ~~[illegible]~~ no sooner had he returned than there came to him from the Board of Guardians a complaint that a pauper had been neglected by his substitute. In a fit of pride Fitzpiers ~~tendered his~~ resigned his ~~[illegible]~~ appointment as one of the surgeons to the Union, which had been the nucleus of his practice here.

At the end of a fortnight he came indoors one evening to Grace, more briskly than usual. "They have written to me again about that practice in Budmouth that I once negociated for," he said to her. "The premium asked is eight hundred pounds, & I

think that between your father & myself it ought to be agreed. Then we can get away from this place for ever." Harris

The ~~subject~~ question had been mooted between her lepse, & she was not unprepared to consider it. They had not proceeded far in their discussion when a knock came to the door, & in a minute Grammer ran up to say that a ~~servant~~ message had arrived from Hintock House requesting Doctor Fitzpiers to attend there at once. Mrs Charmond had met with a slight accident through the overturning of her carriage.

"~~Ah~~ This is something, anyhow," said Fitzpiers, rising with an interest which he could not have defined. "I have had a presentiment that this mysterious woman & I were to be better acquainted." He latter words were murmured to himself alone.

"Good-night," said Grace as soon as he was ready. "I shall be asleep probably when you return."

"Good-night," he replied inattentively, & went downstairs. It was the first time since their marriage that he had left her without a kiss.

Chapter XXVI

Winterborne's house had been pulled down. On this account his face had been seen but seldom in Hintock: & he would probably have disappeared from the place altogether but for his slight business connection with Melbury, on whose premises Giles kept his cider-making apparatus

She had slighted him, but because she had not slighted him enough.

now that he had no place of his own to stow it in. Coming here one ~~this~~ particular evening, on his way to a hut beyond the wood where he now slept, he noticed that the ~~old~~ familiar brown thatched pinion of his paternal roof had vanished from its place (& that the walls were levelled. In recent circumstances he had a feeling for the spot that might have been ~~to call that~~ called morbid, ~~when~~) he had stopped in the hut aforesaid he made use of the spare hour before bedtime to return to Little Hintock in the dusk twilight, & rambling over the patch of ground on which he had first seen the day. [He repeated his visit on several evening occasions like. — Even in the gloom he could trace where the different rooms had stood; & could mark the shape of the kitchen chimney-corner, in which he had roasted apples & potatoes in his boyhood, cast his bullets, & burnt his initials on ~~things~~ articles that did & did not belong to him. The appletrees still remained to show where the garden had been, the oldest of them even now retaining the crippled slant to north-east ~~which had been~~ given them by the great November gale of 1824, which carried a big bodily over the Chesil Bank Beach. They were ~~now~~, at present bent to still greater obliquity ~~still further depressed with~~ by the leanness of their produce, & Apples bobbed against his head, & lay about in the grass beneath the crunched scores of them as he walked. There was nobody to gather them now. It was on the evening under notice that,

Half sitting, half leaning against one of these inclined trunks, Winterborne had become was lost in his thoughts, as usual, till one little star after another had taken up a position in the piece of sky which now confronted him ~~in the quarter~~ where his walls & chimneys had formerly raised their outlines. The house had jutted awkwardly into the road, & the opening caused by its absence

~~had caused~~ was very distinct.

In the silence the ~~wheels~~ trot of horses & the spin of carriage wheels became audible, & the vehicle soon shaped itself against the blank sky, bearing down upon him as with following the bend in the lane which occurred just here, & of which the house had been the cause. ✕ He could discern the figure of a woman driving. Presently there was a slight scrape, then a scream. Winterborne went across to the spot, & found that the carriage phaeton had overturned, its ~~the lady~~ driver, ~~a woman~~ sitting on the heap of rubbish which had once been his dwelling, & a ~~boatman~~ sportsman ~~standing~~ holding the man the horses' heads. The equipage was Mrs Charmond's, & the ~~dishevelled~~ unseated charioteer that lady herself.

To his inquiry if she were hurt she made some incoherent reply to the effect that she did not know. ~~He turned out that~~ The damage in other respects was little or none: the phaeton was righted, Mrs Charmond placed in it, & the reins given to the man servant. It appeared that she had been deceived by the ~~absence~~ removal of the house, imagining the gap caused by the demolition & the opening of the road, so that she turned in upon the ruins instead of at the bend a few yards further on.

"Drive ~~M~~ home – drive ~~M~~ home!" cried the lady impatiently. ~~angrily~~; & they ~~took~~ started on their way. They had not however gone many paces when, the air being still, Winterborne heard her say "Stop: tell that man to call on the doctor – Mr Fitzpiers – & send him on to the House. I find I am hurt more seriously than I thought."

✕ high up on the driving-seat of a phaeton, a groom being just visible behind.

Winterborne took the message from the groom & proceeded to the doctor's at once. Having delivered it he stepped back into the darkness, & waited till he had seen Fitzpiers leave the door. He stood for a few minutes looking at the window which, by its light, revealed the room where Grace was sitting; and went away under the gloomy trees.

White line

Fitzpiers duly arrived at Hintock House; whose doors he now saw open for the first time: Contrary to his expectation there was visible no sign of that confusion or alarm, such as which a serious accident to the mistress of the abode would have occasioned. & She was shown into a room at the top of the staircase, cosily & eminently furnished draped, whereby the light of the shaded lamp he saw a handsome woman of full round figure reclining upon a couch in such a position as not to disturb a pile of magnificent hair on the crown of her head. A deep purple dressing-gown formed an admirable foil to the peculiarly rich brown of her hair-plaits; her left arm, which was naked nearly up to the shoulder, was thrown upwards, & between the fingers of her right hand she held a cigarette, while she idly breathed from her plump lips a thin stream of smoke towards the ceiling.

The doctor's first feeling was a sense of his exaggerated prevision in having brought appliances for a serious case; the next, something more curious. While the scene & the person were moment were new to him, & unanticipated

the sentiment & essence of the moment were indescribably familiar. What could be the cause of it? probably a dream.

Mrs Charwood did not move more than to raise her eyes to him, & the cane dropped by her. She glanced up at his face across her brows & forehead, & then he observed a blush creep slowly over her decidedly handsome face cheeks. Her eyes, which had lingered upon him with an enquiring expression, were hastily withdrawn, & she mechanically applied the cigarette again to her lips.

For a moment he forgot his errand, till suddenly arousing himself he addressed her, formally condoled with her, & made the usual professional inquiries about what had happened to her, & where she was hurt.

"That's what I want you to tell me"; she murmured in tones of indescribable essence. "I quite believe in you, for I know you are very accomplished, because you study so hard."

"I'll do my best to justify your good opinion"; said the young man bowing. "And I don't, none the less that I am happy to find the accident had not been serious."

"I am very much shaken," she said.

"Oh yes," he replied; & completed his examination, which convinced him that there was really nothing the matter with her, & more than ever puzzled him as to why she had been since she did not appear to be a timid woman.

"You must rest awhile; & I'll send something" he said. "You look fatigued."

"Oh, I forgot", she returned. "Look here." And she showed him a little scrape on her arm – the full round arm that was exposed. "Put some court plaster on that, please."

He obeyed. "And now," she said, "before you go I want to ask you just a question to you. Sit round there in front of me, on that low chair, & bring the candles, or one, & the little table. Do you smoke? Yes? That's right – I am learning. Take one of these; & here's a light." She threw a match-box across. caught it & having lit up regarded her from his new position which, with the shifting of the candles, for the first time afforded him a full view of her face. "How many years have passed since last we met?" she resumed, in a voice which she vainly endeavoured to maintain at its former pitch of composure, & eyeing him with daring bashfulness.

"We met, do you say?"

"She nodded. "I saw you recently at an hotel one day in London, when you were passing through, I suppose, with your bride, & I recognised you as one I had met in my girlhood. Do you remember, when you were studying at Heidelberg, an English family that was staying there, who used to walk–"

"And the young lady who wore a long tail of rare-colored hair – ah, I see it before my eyes! – who lost her gloves on the Great Terrace – who was going back in the dusk to find them – to whom I said 'I'll go for them', & you said 'Oh, they are not worth coming all the way up again for'. I do remember, & how very long we stayed talking there! I went next morning whilst the dew was

on the grass: there they lay – the little fingers sticking out damp & thin. I see them now! I picked them up, & then....."

"Well?"

"I kissed them," he rejoined rather shamefacedly.

"But you had hardly ever seen me except in the dusk?"

"Never mind. I was young then, & I kissed them. I wondered how I could make the most of my trouvaille, & decided that I would call at your hotel with them that afternoon. It rained, & I waited till next day. I called, & you were gone."

"Yes," answered she with dry melancholy. "My mother, knowing my disposition, said she did not want such a chit as me to go falling in love with an impecunious student, & spirited me away to Baden. As it is all over & past I'll tell you one thing; I should have sent you a line pressing warm had I known your name. That name I never knew till my maid said as you passed up the hotel stairs ("There's Dr Fitzpiers" a month ago)

"Good heaven," said Fitzpiers musingly. "How the time comes back to me! The evening, the morning, the dew, the spot. When I found that you really were gone it was as if a cold iron had been passed down my back. I went up to where you had stood when I last saw you – I flung myself on the grass, & – being not much more than a boy – my eyes were literally blinded with tears. Nameless, unknown to me as you were I couldn't forget your voice."

"For how long?"

"Oh – ever so long. Days & days."

"Days & days! Only days & days? Oh the heart of a man! Days & days!

"But, my dear madam, I had not known you more than ~~an hour~~ a day or two. It was not a full blown love – it was the merest bud – red, pest, vivid, but small. It was a colossal passion in posse; a giant in embryo. It never matured."

"So much the better perhaps."

"Perhaps. But see how powerless is the human will against predestination. We were prevented meeting; we have met. One feature of the case remains the same amid many changes. You are still rich, & I am still poor. Better than that, you have (judging by your last remark) outgrown the foolish impulsive passions of your ~~girlhood~~ early young. I have not outgrown mine."

"I beg your pardon", said she with ~~tremors of tenderness~~ vibrations of strong feeling in her words. "I have been placed in a position which hinders such outgrowing. Besides, I don't believe that the genuine subjects of emotion do outgrow them; I believe that the older such people get the worse they are. Possibly at ninety or a hundred they may feel they are cured; but threescore & ten won't do it, ~~for me~~ – at least for me."

He gazed at her in undisguised admiration. Here was a soul of souls! "Mrs Charmond, you ~~have said, he said superlatively such superlative~~ speak truly," he exclaimed. "But you speak sadly as well. Why is that?"

"I always am sad when I come here," she said dropping ~~her tones~~ to a low tone with a sense of having been too ~~enthusiastic tender~~ demonstrative.

"Then may I inquire why you came?"

"A man brought me. Women are always carried about like corks upon the waves of masculine desires.... I hope I have not alarmed you; but Hintlock has the curious effect of bottling up the emotions till one can no longer hold them; I am often obliged to fly away & discharge my sentiments somewhere, or I should die outright."

"There is very good society in the county, I suppose, for those who have the privilege of entering it."

"Perhaps so. But the misery of remote country life is that your neighbours have no toleration for differences of opinion & habit. My neighbours think I am an atheist, except those who think I am a Roman Catholic; & when I speak disrespectfully of the weather or the crops they think I am a blasphemer." She broke into a low musical laugh at the idea.

"You don't wish me to stay any longer?" he inquired, when he found that she remained musing.

"No – I think not."

"Then tell me that I am to be gone."

"Why? Cannot you go without?"

"I may consult my own feelings only, if left to myself."

"Well if you do, what then? do you suppose you'll be in my way?"

"I feared it might be so."

"Then fear no more. But good-night. Come to-morrow & see if I am going on right. This renewal of acquaintance I have already a friendship for you."

This renewal of acquaintance touches me.

"If it depends upon myself it shall last for ever."

"My best hopes that it may. Good-bye."

Fitzpiers went down the stairs absolutely unable to decide whether she had sent for him in the natural alarm which might have followed her mishap, or with the single view of making herself known to him as she had done, for which the capsize had afforded excellent opportunity. Outside the house he mused over the spot under the light of the stars. It seemed very strange that he should have come here more than once when its inhabitant was absent, & observed the house with a nameless interest; that he should have assumed offhand before he knew Grace that it was here she lived; that, in short, at sundry times & seasons the individuality of Hintock House should have forced itself upon him as appertaining to some existence with which he was concerned.

The intersection of this temporal orbit with Mrs Charmond's for a day or two in the past had created a sentimental interest in her at the time, but it had been so evanescent that in the ordinary onward roll of affairs he would scarce ever have recalled it again. To find her here, however, in these somewhat romantic circumstances, magnified that bygone & transitory tenderness to indescribable proportions.

On entering Little Hintock he found himself regarding it in a new way — from the Hintock House point of view rather than from his own & the Melbury's. The household had all gone to bed, &

as he ~~turned~~ went upstairs he heard the snore of the timber-merchant from his quarter of the ~~residence~~ building, & turned into the passage communicating with his own rooms ~~with~~ in a strange ~~access~~ fit of sadness. A light was burning for him in the chamber; but Grace, though in bed, was not asleep. In a moment her ~~tenderness~~ sympathetic voice came from behind the curtains. ["Edgar, is she very seriously hurt?"

Fitzpiers had so entirely lost sight of Mrs Charmond as a patient that he was not on the instant ~~moved~~ ready with a reply. "Oh no," he said. "There are no bones broken, but she is shaken. I am going again to-morrow."

Another inquiry or two, & Grace said "Did she ask for me?"

"Well – I think she did – I don't quite remember; but I am under the impression that she spoke of you."

"Can not you ~~always~~ recollect at all what she said?"

"I cannot just this minute."

"At any rate she did not talk much about me?" said Grace with disappointment.

"Oh no."

"But you did perhaps," she added innocently fishing for a compliment.

"Oh yes – you may depend upon that!" replied he warmly forcibly, though scarcely thinking of what he was saying, so vividly was here present to his mind the personality of Mrs Charmond.

Chapter XXVII

The doctor's professional visit to Hintock House was promptly repeated the next day & the next. He always found Mrs Charmond reclining on a sofa, & (generally behaving) as became a patient who was in no great hurry to lose that title. On each occasion he looked gravely at the little scratch on her arm, as if it had been a serious wound.

He had also to his further satisfaction found a slight scar on her temple; & it was very convenient to put a piece of black plaster in preference to gold-beater's skin on this conspicuous part of her person, so that it might catch the eyes of the servants, & make his presence appear decidedly necessary, in case there should be any doubt of the fact.

"Oh – you hurt me!" she exclaimed one day.

He was peeling off the bit of plaster on her arm, under which the scrape had ~~already dis~~ turned the colour of an unripe blackberry previous to vanishing altogether. "Wait a moment then – I'll damp it," said Fitzpiers. He put his lips to the place & kept them there till the plaster came off easily. ~~when he turned up their eyes met~~. "It was at your request I put it on," said he.

"I know it," she replied. "Is that blue vein in still my temple that used to show there? The scar must be just upon it. If the cut had been a little deeper it would have spilt my hot blood indeed!" Fitzpiers ~~Then~~ examined so closely that his breath touched her tenderly, at which their eyes rose to ~~another~~ She turned her face away suddenly. "Ah – none of that – none of that – I cannot an encounter, – hers showing themselves as deep & mysterious as interstellar space. She

coquet with you!" she cried, ~~darling~~ "Dont suppose I consent to for one moment. Our poor brief ~~s~~hours of youthful lovemaking was too long ago to bear continuing now. It is as well that we should understand each other on that point ~~matter~~ before we go further."

"Coquet! Nor I with you. As it was when I found the historic ~~these~~ flowers ~~of yours~~ so it is now. I might have been & may be foolish; but I am no trifler. I naturally cannot forget that little space in which I flitted across the field of your vision in those days of the past, & the recollection opens up all sorts of imaginings."

"Suppose my mother had not taken me away," she murmured, her dreamy eyes resting on the swaying tip of a distant tree.

"I should have seen you again."

"And then?"

"Then the fire would have burnt higher & higher. What would have immediately followed I know not; but sorrow & sickness of heart at last."

"Why?"

"Well — that's the end of all love, according to Nature's law. I can give no other reason."

"Oh & dont speak like that," she exclaimed. "Since we are only picturing the possibilities of that time, dont for pity sake spoil the picture." Her voice sank almost to a whisper as she added, with an indipient pout upon her full lips, "Let me think at least that if you had really loved me at all seriously, you would have loved me for ever & ever!"

"You are right – think it with all your heart," said he. "It is a pleasant thought, & costs nothing".

She weighed that remark in silence awhile.

"Did you ever hear anything of me from them till now?" she inquired.

"Not a word."

"So much the better. I had to fight the battle of life as well as you. I may tell you about it some day. But don't ever ask me to do it, & particularly do not press me to tell you now."

Thus the two or three days that they had spent in framing tender mute acquaintance on the romantic slopes about Heidelberg (in retrospect to the length & importance of years; made) on the Neckar were stretched out to form a canvas for infinite fancies, idle dreams, luxurious melancholies, & alluring sweet al- assertions which could neither be proved nor disproved. Grace was never mentioned between them, but a rumour of his proposed changes domestic intentions somehow reached her ears.

"Doctor – you are going away," she exclaimed one day, confronting him in tones with an accusatory reproach in her large dark eyes no less than in her rich cooing voice. "Oh yes you are," she went on, springing to her feet with an air which might almost have been called passionate. "It is no use denying it. You have bought a practice in Budmouth. I don't blame you. Nobody can live in Hintock – least of all a professional man who wants to keep abreast of recent discovery. And there is nobody here to induce such a one to stay for other reasons. – That's right, that's right – go away!"

"But no – I have not actually bought the practice as yet, though I am indeed in treaty for it. And, my dear friend, if I continue to feel about the business as I feel at this moment – perhaps I may never to go conclude it at all."

"But you hate Hintock & everything & everybody in it. What you don't mean to take away with you?"

Fitzpiers ~~countenance~~ eloquently contradicted this idea in his most vibratory tones, & she lapsed into the frivolous archness under which she hid passions of no mean strength — strange, smouldering erratic passions, kept down like a stifled conflagration, but bursting out now here, now there — the only certain element in their ~~them~~ direction being its unexpectedness. If one word could have expressed her it would have been Inconsequence. She was a woman of perversities, delighting in piquant contrasts. She liked mystery in her life, in her love, in her history. To be fair to her, there was nothing in the latter which she had any great reason to be ashamed of, & many things of which she might have been proud; but it had never been fathomed by the honest minds of Hintock, & she rarely volunteered her experiences. As for her capricious nature, the people on her estates ~~got~~ grew accustomed to it, & with that marvellous subtlety of contrivance in steering round odd tempers that is found in ~~the~~ sons of the soil, & dependents generally, they managed to get along under her ~~government~~ rather better than they would have done beneath a more equable rule.

Now, with regard to ~~that~~ the doctor's notion of leaving Hintock, he had advanced further towards completing the purchase of the Budmouth surgeon's good-will than he had admitted to Mrs Charmond. The whole matter hung upon what he might do in the ensuing twenty-four hours. ~~He~~ The evening after leaving her he went ~~under the rays of the folding stile,~~ out into the lane & walked up & down between & powdered

the high hedges, now greenish white with wild clematis – here called "old-man's-beard" from its aspect later on in the year.

The letter of acceptance was to be written that night, after which his departure from Langton Hintock would be irrevocable. But could he go away, remembering often what had just passed? The trees, the hills, the leaves, the grass – each had been endowed with a quickened subtle charm since he had discovered the person & history, above all, mood of their owner. There was every temporal reason for leaving: it would be entering again into a world which he had only quitted in a passion for isolation privacy, induced by a fit of Achillean moodiness after an imagined slight. His wife herself saw the awkwardness of their position here, & cheerfully welcomed the proposed change, towards which every step had been taken but the last. But could he find it in his heart – as he found it clearly enough in his conscience – to go away?

He drew a troubled breath, & went indoors. Here he rapidly penned a letter, wherein he withdrew, once for all, from the treaty for the Budmouth practice. As the postman had already left Little Hintock for that night he sent one of Melbury's men to intercept a mail-cart on another turnpike-road; & so got the letter off.

The man returned, met Fitzpiers in the lane, & told him the thing was done. Fitzpiers returned went back to his house musing. Why had he carried out this impulse – taken such wild trouble & effected a probable injury to his own & his young wife's prospects? His motive would

was fantastic, glowing, shapeless, as the fiery scenery abound the western sky. Mrs Charmond could overtly be nothing more to him than a patient now, & to his wife at the outside a patron. ~~he said to himself bitterly~~ In the unattached bachelor-days of his first sojourning here how highly proper an emotional season for lingering on would have appeared to a troublesome self-enquiry conscience dubiousness. Matrimonial ambition is such an honourable thing

"My father has told me that you have sent off one of the men with a late letter to Budmouth," cried Grace coming out to meet him vivaciously under the declining light of the sky wherein hung solitary the folding star. "I said at once that you had agreed singly to pay the premium they ask, & that the tedious question had been settled. When do we go, Edgar?"

"I have altered my mind," said he. "They want too much — seven-hundred & fifty is too large a sum, — & in short I have declined to go further. We must wait for another opportunity ... I fear I feel I am not a good business-man." He spoke the last words with a momentary faltering at sense of the great foolishness of his act; for as he looked in her fair & honourable face, his heart reproached him for what he had done

Her manner that evening showed her disappointment. Personally she liked the home of her childhood much; & she was not ambitious. But her husband had seemed so dissatisfied with the circumstances here about since their marriage that she had sincerely hoped to go for his sake. It was two or three days before he visited Mrs Charmond again. The weather

morning had been windy, & little showers had sowed themselves like grain against the walls & window-panes of the Hintock cottages. He went on foot across the wilder recesses quarter of the park, where slimy streams of green moisture, ran down the bark of the oaks & elms, exuding from decayed holes caused by old amputations, & the rind below being coated with a lichenous wash as green as emerald. They were stout-trunked trees that never bended their stems in the fiercest gale, responding to it entirely by crooking their limbs; wrinkled like an old crone's face, & antlered with dead branches that rose above the foliage of their summits, they were nevertheless still green - though yellow had invaded the leaves of other trees.

She was in a little boudoir, or writing-room on the first floor, & Felipa was much surprised to find that the window-curtains were closed & a red-shaded lamp & candles burning, though out of doors it was broad daylight. A large fire was burning in the grate, though it was not cold. Moreover

"What does it all mean?" he asked.

She sat in an easy chair, with her face being turned away. "Oh," she murmured, "it is because the world is so dreary outside. Sorrow & bitterness in the sky, & floods of agonized tears beating against the panes. I lay awake last night, & I could hear the scrape of snails creeping up the window glass; & it was so sad! My eyes were so heavy this morning that I could have wept my life away. I cannot bear you

to see my face; I keep it away from you purposely. Oh ~~Mr. Fitzpiers~~ & why were we given hungry hearts & wild desires if we have to live in a world like this? Answer that, Doctor Fitzpiers."

"Why should death only end what life is compelled to borrow — rest?

"You must eat of a second tree of knowledge before you can do it," Felice Charmond.

"Then, when my emotions have exhausted themselves, I become full of fears, till I think I shall die for very fear. The terrible insistences of society — how severe they are, & cold, & inexorable — ghastly to towards those who are made of real & not of stone. Oh I am afraid of them; & I am afraid for this error, & I am afraid for that: ~~& what are the regulations of society~~ — correctives & regulations framed that society may tend to perfection — ~~how to achieve~~ an end which I don't care for in the least. Yet for this all I do care for has to be stunted & starved."

Fitzpiers had seated himself near her. "What sets you in this mournful mood?" he asked gently, (In reality it was the result of a loss of tone from staying indoors so much — He knew that ~~it was the result of overwork~~; but he did not say so).

"My reflections. Doctor, you must not come here any more. They begin to think it a farce already. I say you must come no more. There — don't be angry with me." and she jumped up, pressed his hand & looked anxiously at him. "It is necessary. It is best for both you & me."

"But," said Fitzpiers gloomily, "what have we done?"

"Done — we have done nothing. Perhaps we have thought the more. However it is all vexation. I am going away to Middleton ~~Towers~~ Abbey, ~~Stickworth~~ near Sholtsford, where a relative of my late husband's lives, who is confined when bed. The engagement was made in London, & I can't get out of it. Perhaps it is for the best that I go there till all this is past..... When are

you going to enter on your new practice, & leave Hintock behind for ever, with your pretty wife on your arm?"

"I have refused the opportunity. I love this place too well to depart."

"You have?" she said, regarding him with wild uncertainty. "Why do you ruin yourself in that way? Great heaven, what have I done!"

"Nothing. Besides you are going away."

"Oh yes; but only to Middleton Abbey for a month or two. Yet perhaps I shall gain strength there – particularly strength of mind – I require it. And when I come back I shall be a new woman; & you can come & see me safely then, & bring your wife with you, & we'll be friends – she & I. Oh, how this shutting up of one's self does lead to the indulgence in idle sentiments. I shall not wish you to give your attendance to me after to-day..... But I am glad that you are not going away – if your remaining does not injure your prospects at all."

As soon as he had left the room the mild friendliness she had preserved in her tone at parting, the playful sadness with which she had conversed with him, equally departed from her. She became as heavy as lead – just as she had been before he arrived. Her whole being seemed to dissolve in a sad powerlessness to do anything, & the sense of it made her lips tremulous & her closed eyes wet. His footsteps again startled her, & she turned round.

"I return for a moment to tell you that the evening is going to be fine. The sun is shining; so do open your curtains & put out those lights."

lights. Shall I do it for you."

"Please – if you don't mind."

He drew back the window curtains, whereupon the red glow of the lamp, & the two candle-flames, became almost invisible with the flood of late autumn sunlight that poured in. "Shall I come round to you?" he asked, her back being towards him.

"No," she replied.

"Why not."

"Because I am crying, & I don't want to see you."

He stood a moment irresolute, & regretted that he had openly killed the rosy passionate lamplight by opening the curtains, and letting in garish day.

"Then I am going," he said

"Very well," she answered, stretching one hand round to him, & patting her eyes with a handkerchief held in the other.

"Shall I write a line to you at —"

"No, no." A gentle reasonableness came into her tone as she added, "It must not be. It won't do."

"Very well. Good bye." The next moment he was gone.

In the evening, with listless adroitness, she encouraged the maid who dressed her for dinner to speak of Fitzpiers's manner.

"Mrs Fitzpiers was once supposed to favour Mr Winterborne," said the young woman.

"And why didn't she marry him?" said Mrs Charmond.

"Because you see, ma'am, he lost his houses."

"Lost his houses? How came he to do that?"

"The houses were held on lives, & the lives dropped, & your agent wouldn't renew them, though it is said that Mr Winterborne

had a very good claim. That's as I've heard it ma'am; & 'twas through it that the match was broke off."

Being just then distracted by a dozen emotions Mrs Charmond sank into a mood of dismal self-reproach. "In refusing that poor man his reasonable request", she said to herself, "I ~~entered~~ foredoomed my rejuvenated girlhood's romance. Who would have thought such a business matter could have nettled my own heart like this! Now for a winter of regrets, & agonies, & useless wishes till I forget him in the spring. Or I am glad I am going away away. [She left her chamber & went down to dine with a sigh. On the stairs she stood opposite the large window for a moment, & looked out upon the lawn. It was not yet quite dark. Half-way up the steep green slope confronting her stood ~~Robert Penny~~ an aged ~~partner~~ who was shortening his way old Timothy Tangs. homeward by clambering here where there was no road, & in opposition to express orders ~~against making a path~~ that no path was to be made there. Tangs had momentarily stopped to take a pinch of snuff; but observing Mrs Charmond gazing at him he hastened to get over the top out of hail. But His precipitancy made him miss his footing, & he rolled like a barrel to the bottom, his snuff-box rolling of him. in front ~~of him~~ [her indefinite idle, impossible ~~love~~ passion for Fitzpiers, her constitutional cloud of misery, the sorrowful drops that still hung upon her eyelashes, all made way for the incursive ~~intrusive~~ mood started by the spectacle. ~~abandonment of the moment~~. She burst into an immoderate fit of laughter — her very gloom of the previous hour seeming to render it the more uncontrollable. It had not died out of her when she

~~had~~ reached the dining-room; & even here before the servants her shoulders suddenly shook as the scene returned upon her; & tears of her hilarity mingled with the remnants of those engendered by her grief. ~~She reached~~

She resolved to be sad no more. She drank ~~a bumper~~ two glasses of champagne, & a little more still after more; & amused herself in the evening with singing little amatory songs.

"I must do something for that poor man Winterborne," she said however.

Chapter ~~XXVIII~~

A week had passed, & Mrs Charmond had left Hintock House. ~~Middleton~~ Middleton Abbey, the place of her sojourn ~~stay~~, was about twenty miles distant by road; eighteen by bridle-paths & footways.

Grace observed that for the first time that her husband was restless, that (he even at moments) was disposed to avoid her. ~~He was never impolite~~ The scrupulous civility of mere acquaintanceship crept into his manner; ~~but scrupulously cold~~ yet when sitting at meals he seemed harshly to hear her remarks ~~to him~~. Her little doings ~~no~~ interested him no longer; whilst towards her ~~what she said~~. It was plain that his mind was entirely outside her life, — rather his bearing was not far from supercilious.

Whereabouts outside it she could not tell. ~~She hoped~~ in some region of science ~~she hoped, but cannot believe~~ possibly, or of psychological literature ~~her little doings no longer interested him. If he had to encounter her father, his bearing~~ ~~manner was almost supercilious~~. But her hope that he was again immersed in those incubations, which before her marriage had made his light a landmark in Hintock, was ~~strengthened by the~~ founded simply on the slender fact that he often sat up late, as ~~if studying something or other~~.

Pub. Down

(She discovered ~~found~~ him one evening) leaning over a gate on ~~Stapdon~~ Hill

– The gate at which Winterborne had once been standing, & which opened on the brink of a steep, slanting down directly into Blackmoor or Vale, the Vale of the White Hart Blackmore, extending beneath the eye at this point to a distance of many miles. His attention was fixed on the landscape far away, & Grace's approach was so noiseless that he did not hear her. When she came close she could see his lips moving unconsciously as to some impassioned visionary theme. that he was reciting lines of impassioned verse. She spoke, & Fitzpiers started. "What are you looking at?" she asked.

"Oh – I was contemplating our old place of Backbury, in my idle way" he said

It had seemed to her that he was looking much to the right of that cradle & tomb of his ancestral dignity, but she made no further observation, & taking his arm walked home beside him almost in silence. She did not know that Middleton abbey lay in the direction of his gaze. "Are you the young & have out Darling this afternoon?" she asked presently – "Darling" being the chasse white light grey mare which Winterborne had bought for Grace, & which Fitzpiers now constantly used, the animal having turned out a wonderful bargain in combining a perfect docility with an almost human intelligence; moreover she was not too young. Fitzpiers was not unfamiliar with horses, & he valued these qualities.

"Yes," he replied; "but not to drive. I am riding her. I am practise crossing a horse as often as I can now, for I find that I can take much shorter cuts on horseback.

He had in fact taken these riding exercises for about a week – only since Mrs Charmond's absence, his universal practice hitherto having been to drive. Some few days later Fitzpiers started on the back of this horse to see a patient in the aforesaid Vale. It was about five o'clock in the

when he went away, & at the time
evening ~~at the time, but~~ he had not reached home. There was nothing
very
singular in this, though she was not aware that he had any patient more
than five or six miles distant in that direction. ~~He did~~ The clock had struck two
before Fitzpiers
~~he had~~ entered the house, & he came to his room softly, as if anxious not to disturb
her. The next morning she was ~~down stairs~~ stirring considerably earlier than he & in

In passing through the ~~outer~~ room she picked up her husband's overcoat which he had carelessly
flung down across a chair. A turnpike-ticket fell out of the breast-pocket,
& she saw that it had been
issued at Middleton Gate. He had therefore visited Middleton the previous night, a
distance of at least five-&-thirty miles there & back on horseback.

During the day she made some enquiries & learnt for the first time that
Mrs Charmond was staying at Middleton Abbey. In the yard there was a conversation going on
~~between the men~~ about the mare, the man who attended to the horses, Darling
included, insisting that the latter was "hag-rid;" for when he had arrived at the stable that
morning she was in such a state as no horse could be in by honest riding. It was
true that the doctor had stabled her himself when he got home, so that she was
not looked after as she would have been if he had groomed & fed her, but
~~him~~ that did not account for the appearance she presented, if Mr Fitzpiers's journey had
been only where he had stated. The phenomenal ~~appearance~~ exhaustion of Darling as thus related
was sufficient to develope a whole series of tales about riding-witches & demons,
the narration of which occupied a ~~great part of the day~~ considerable time.

Grace returned indoors. She could not resist an inference — strange
as that inference was.

A few days later he prepared to start again, at the same time and in the same direction. She knew that the state of the cottager who lived that way was a mere pretext; she was quite sure he was going to Mrs Charmond. Grace was amazed at the mildness of the passion which the suspicion had engendered in her: she was but little excited, & even her jealousy was languid to death. It told tales of the nature of her affection for him. In truth her ante-nuptial regard for Fitzpiers had been rather of the quality of awe towards a superior being than of tender solicitude for a lover. It had been based upon mystery & strangeness — the mystery of his past, of his knowledge, of his professional skill, of his beliefs. When this structure of ideals was demolished by the intimacy of common life, & she found him as merely human as the Winterbourne people themselves, a new foundation was in demand for an enduring & staunch affection — a sympathetic interdependence, wherein mutual weaknesses were made the grounds of a defensive alliance. Fitzpiers had furnished none of that single-minded confidence & truth out of which alone such a union could spring; hence it was with a controllable emotion that she now watched the mare brought round.

"I'll walk with you to the hill," she said. "Accordingly, if you are not in a great hurry," she said, rather loth, after all, to let him go.

"No; there is plenty of time," replied he. Accordingly he led along the horse & walked beside her, impatient enough nevertheless. Thus they proceeded to the Turnpike-road, & ascended Rub-down Hill to the gate he had been leaning over when she surprised him ten days before. This was the end of her excursion,

X. and she observed that he looked weary-eyed. "Why do you go to-night?" she said. "You have been called up two nights in succession already."

"I must go," he answered, almost gloomily. "Don't wait up for me."

With these words he mounted ~~~

Fitzpiers bade her adieu with affection, even with tenderness, mounted his horse, passed through the gate, which Grace held open for him, and ambled down the steep bridle-track to the valley.

She closed the gate & watched his descent, & then his journey onward. His way was east, the evening sun which stood behind her back beaming full upon him as soon as he got out from the shade of the hill. Notwithstanding this untoward proceeding she was determined to be loyal if she proved true; & the determination to love one's best will carry a heart a long way towards making that best an ever growing thing. The conspicuous coat of the active though blanching mare made horse & rider easy objects for the vision. Though Darling had been chosen with such pains by Winterborne for Grace she had never ridden the sleek creature; but though Fitz her husband had found the animal exceedingly convenient, particularly now that he had taken the saddle, plenty of staying power being left in Darling yet. Fitzpiers, like others of his character, while despising Melbury & his station, did not at all disdain to spend Melbury's money, or use the appurtenances of his own use the horse which belonged to his daughter.

And so the Doctor (infatuated young fantastical surgeon) went along through the gorgeous autumn landscape of the White-Hart Vale, surrounded by orchards & hedgerows with the reds of apple-crops, berries, & foliage, the whole interspired by the gilding of the declining sun. The earth this year had been prodigally bountiful, & now was the supreme moment of her bounty. In the poorest spots the hedges were

bowed with haws & blackberries; acorns cracked underfoot, & the ~~seeds of the limes, suppated parachute-wise by the wing attached~~ burst husks of chestnuts lay exposing their auburn contents as if arranged by anxious sellers in a fruit-market. In all this proud show some kernels were unsound as her own situation, & she wondered if there were one world in the universe where the fruit had no worm, & marriage no sorrow.

Her Tannhauser still moved on, his plodding steed rendering him distinctly visible yet. Could she have heard Fitzpiers's voice at that moment she would have found him murmuring

—"Towards the lode-star of my one ~~delight~~ desire
I flitted, even as a dizzy moth in the owlet light."

But he was a silent spectacle to her now. Soon he rose out of the valley, & skirted a high plateau of the chalk formation on his right, which rested abruptly upon the fruitful district of loamy clay, & the character & herbage of the two formations being so distinct that the calcareous upland appeared but as a deposit of a few years' antiquity upon the level vale. He kept along the edge of this high ~~ensheltered~~ country, & the sky behind him being deep violet she could still see white Darking in relief upon it — a mere speck now — a ~~microscopic~~ Wouvermans eccentrically ~~work of art~~ reduced to microscopic dimensions. Upon this high ground he gradually disappeared.

Thus she had beheld the pet animal purchased for her own use, in pure love of her, by one who had always been true, ~~was~~ impressed made to convey her husband (to the side of a ~~dream~~ away from her) new-found idol. While she was

musing on the vicissitudes of ~~times~~ horses & wives she discerned shapes moving up the valley towards her, quite near at hand, though till now hidden by the hedges. Surely they were Giles Winterborne, with his two horses & cider-apparatus, conducted by Robert Creedle. Up, upward they crept, a stray beam of the sun ~~glistening~~ alighting every now & then like a star on the blades of the pomace-shovels, brightened which had been converted to ~~to take~~ steel mirrors by the action of the malic acid. She opened the gate when he came close, & the panting horses rested as they achieved the ascent.

"How do you do, Giles", said she, under a sudden ~~con~~impulse to be familiar with him.

He replied with much more reserve. "You are going for a walk, Mrs Fitzpiers," he added. "It is pleasant just now".

"No, I am returning", said she. [The vehicles passed through, the gate slammed, & Winterborne walked by her side in the rear of the apple-mill.

He looked & smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as corn-flowers, his boots & leggings dyed ~~dark~~ dark with fruit stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, & his hat sprinkled with pips, & everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born & bred among the orchards. Her heart rose ~~like~~ from its late sadness like a released spring; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to nature madonned. The consciousness of having to be genteel became of her husband's suspension. The veneer of artificiality which she had acquired at the fashionable schools, were thrown off, & she became the ~~rude~~ crude country girl of her latent, earliest instincts.

Nature was bountiful, she thought. No sooner had she been

⁂ for the last week."

"~~Is not~~, Haven't they a mill of their own?"

"~~Yes~~ "Yes, but it's out of repair".

"I think — I heard that Mrs Charmond had gone there to stay?"

"Yes. I ~~saw~~ have seen her at the windows once or twice".

Grace waited an interval before she went on, "Did Mr Fitzpiers m

staved off by Edgar Fitzpiers than another being, (had arisen out of the impersonating bare & undeluted manliness, earth, ready to hand. This was an excursion of the imagination which she did not encourage, & she said suddenly, to disguise the conjured regard look which had followed ~~of~~ her thoughts, "Did you meet my husband?"

Winterborne, with some hesitation: "Yes".

"Where did you meet him?"

"At Calfhay Cross. I come from Middleton Abbey; I have been making there: ~~he did~~ take the way to Middleton?"

"Yes... I met him on Darling." As she did not reply he added with a gentler inflection, "You know why the mare was called that?"

"Oh yes – of course", she answered quickly.

They had risen so far over the crest of the hill that the whole west sky was revealed. Between the broken clouds they could see far into the recesses of heaven, the eye journeying on under a species of golden arcades, & past fiery obstructions, fancied cairns, logan-stones, stalactites & stalagmite of topaz. Deeper than this their gaze passed thin flakes of incandescence, ~~beyond the border of fire~~, till it plunged into a bottomless medium of soft green fire.

~~Together~~ Her abandonment to the luscious time after her sense of ill-usage, her revolt for the nonce against social law, her passionate desire for primitive life, (may have) showed in her face. ~~or not.~~ Winterborne was looking at her, his eyes lingering on a flower that she wore in her bosom. Almost ~~Quite~~ with the abstraction of a somnambulist he stretched out his hand & gently caressed the flower.

She drew back. "What are you doing, Giles Winterborne!" she exclaimed.

with a look of severe surprise. The evident absence of all premeditation from the act, however, speedily ~~reminded her~~ led her to think that it was not necessary to stand upon her dignity here & now. "You must bear in mind Giles," she said kindly, "that we are not as we were; & some people might have said that what you did was taking a liberty."

It was more than she need have told him; his action of forgetfulness had made him so angry with himself that he flushed through his tan. "I don't know what I am coming to!" he exclaimed savagely. "Ah – I was not once like this!" Tears of vexation were in his eyes.

"Nonsense, now – it was nothing. I was too reproachful." ~~Give me your hand, you are my friend, & let me and I want to continue that~~ ~~as matter.~~

"It would not have occurred to me if I had not seen something like it done elsewhere – at Middleton lately," he said thoughtfully after a while.

"By whom?"

"Don't ask it."

She scanned him narrowly. "I know quite well enough" she returned indifferently "It was by my husband, & the woman was Mrs Charmond. Association of ideas reminded you when you saw me..... Giles – tell me all you know about that!" – Please do Giles! But no – I won't hear it. Let the subject cease. And as you are my friend say nothing to my father."

They reached a place where ~~the road forks~~ their ways divided. Winterborne continued along the highway which kept outside the copse, & Grace opened a gate which that entered it.

Chapter XXIX

She walked up the soft grassy ride, nut-bushes screened on either hand by nut-bushes, just now heavy with clusters of twos & threes & fours. A little way on the track she pursued was crossed by a similar one at right angles. Here Grace stopped; some few yards up the (bypassing) ride, the bye-way (through her pocket-hole) Suke Damson was visible — her gown tucked up high & no bonnet on her head — in the act of pulling down boughs from which she was gathering & eating nuts, with great rapidity, her lover Jim Tangs standing near her engaged in the same pleasant meal

Crack, crack, went Suke's jaws every second or two. By an automatic train of thought Grace's mind reverted to the tooth-drawing scene described by her husband; & for the first time she wondered if that narrative were really true, Susan's jaws being so obviously sound & strong. Grace turned up towards the nut-gatherers & conquered her reluctance to speak to the girl, who was a little in advance of Jim. "Good evening Susan", she said.

"Good evening Miss Melbury." (crack.)

"Mrs Fitzpiers."

"Oh yes, Mrs Fitzpiers." said Suke with a peculiar smile.

Grace, not to be daunted, continued, "Take care of your teeth Suke. That accounts for the toothache."

"I don't know what an ache is, either in tooth, ear, or head, thank the Lord." (crack). ["Nor the loss of one either?" ["See for yourself m'am." She parted her red lips, & exhibited the whole double row, full up & unimpaired. ["You have never had one drawn." ["Never."

"So much better for your stomach!" said ~~Grace~~ Mrs Fitzpiers in an altered voice. And turning away quickly she went on.

As her husband's character thus shaped itself under the touch of time Grace was almost startled to find how little she suffered from that jealous excitement which is conventionally attributed to all wives in such circumstances. But though ~~it~~ possessed by none of that feline wildness which it was her moral duty to ~~feel~~ experience, she did not fail to know that she had made a frightful mistake in her marriage. Acquiescence in her father's wishes had been degradation to herself. People are not given premonitions for nothing; she should have obeyed her impulse on that early morning & steadfastly refused her hand.

Oh that plausible tale which her then betrothed had told her about Suke — the dramatic account of her entreaties to him to draw the aching enemy, & the fine artistic touch he had given to the ~~tale~~ story by explaining that it was a lovely molar without a flaw!

She traced the remainder of the woodland track, dazed by the complications of her position. If his protestations were to her before their marriage could be believed, her husband had felt affection of some sort for herself & this woman simultaneously; & was now again ~~feeling affection~~ spreading the same thing emotion over Mrs Charmond & herself, conjointly, since his manner ~~was~~ being still kind & fond at times. But surely, (rather than that) he must have played the hypocrite towards her in each case with elaborate completeness; & the thought of this sickened her, for it involved the conjecture that if he had not loved her

~~Fitzpiero watched her~~ Isabella adieu (& mounted)
~~Fitzpiero watched her~~ ~~progress~~ ~~with affectionate~~ ~~solicitude~~ ~~tenderness~~ (as they passed)
~~through the gate & ambled down the steep bridle track to the valley~~

his only motive for making her his wife must have been her little fortune. Yet here Grace made a mistake, for the love of men like Fitzpiers is of such quality as to ~~resist~~ bear ~~scrutiny or more than one object~~ division & transference. He had indeed once declared, though not to her, that (he had on one occasion) noticed himself to be possessed by five distinct infatuations at the same time. Nevia it differed from the highest effects as the lower orders of the animal world differ from advanced organisms, partition causing not death but a multiplied existence. He had loved her sincerely, & had by no means ceased to love her now. But such double & treble-barrelled hearts were (they) naturally beyond her conception.

Harvey

Of poor Luke Dameon Grace thought no more. She had had her day. ~~If~~ "If he does not love me I will not love him!" said Grace proudly. And though these were mere words, it was a somewhat formidable thing for Fitzpiers that her heart was ~~past a certain~~ approximating to a state in which it might be possible to carry them out. That very absence of hot jealousy which made his courses so easy, & on which, indeed, he congratulated himself, meant, unknown to either wife or husband, more mischief than the inconvenient watchfulness of a jaundiced eye.

Her sleep that night was nervous. The wing allotted to her & her husband ~~young couple~~ had never ~~seemed~~ been so lonely. At last she got up, put on ~~slipped into~~ her dressing-gown, & went downstairs. Her father, who slept lightly, heard her descend, & came to the stair-head. "Is that you, Grace? What's the matter?" he said "Nothing more than that I am restless." Edgar is detained by a

case at Owlscombe in White-Hart Vale."

"But — how's that? I saw the woman's husband at Great Hintock just after bed-time; & she was going on well, & the doctor gone then."

"Then he's detained somewhere else," said Grace. "Never mind me: he will soon be home." I expect him about one".

She went back to her room, & dozed & woke several times. One o' clock had been the hour of his return on the last occasion; but it passed now by a long way, & Fitzpiers did not come. Just before dawn she heard the men stirring in the yard; & the flashes of their lanterns spread every now & then through her window-blind. She remembered that her father had told her not to be disturbed if she noticed them, as they would be rising early to send off four loads of hurdles to a distant sheep-fair. Peeping out she saw them bustling about, the hollow-turner among the rest; he was loading his wares — wooden bowls, dishes, spigots, spoons, cheese-vats, funnels & so on — upon one of the carters waggons, who carried them to the fair for him every year out of neighbourly kindness.

The scene & the occasion would have enlivened her but that her husband was still absent; though it was now five o'clock. She could hardly suppose him, whatever his infatuation, to have lingered at Middleton later than an ostensibly professional call on Mrs Charmond at Middleton; & he could have ridden home in two hours or help. What then had become of him? That he had been out the greater part of the preceding night added to her uneasiness

not bear examining as the [illegible] in the matter had reached London early residents
of this first settlement have to [illegible] natural [illegible] reason for
but the only pretext kept him now was that he had
keeping on [illegible] he had changed his plan for decided to
beside a lady who [illegible] in present circumstances husband. [illegible]
do so on account of a woman who could [illegible] to him was a patient,
[illegible]
of his life at the outset a pastor.

was for.

She dressed herself, descended, went out, the weird twilight of advancing day chilling the rays from the lanterns, & making the men's faces wan. As soon as Melbury saw her he came round, showing his alarm.

"Edgar is not come," she said. And I have reason to know that he's not attending anybody. He has had no rest for two nights before this." I was going to the top of the hill to look for him."

"I'll come with you", said Melbury.

She begged him not to hinder himself; but he insisted, for he saw a peculiar rigid gloom in her face over & above her uneasiness, & did not like the look of it. Telling the men he would be with them again soon he walked beside her into the turnpike-road, partly up the ascent of the hill whence she had watched Fitzpiers the night before across the great White-Hart or Blackmoor Valley. They halted beneath a half-dead oak, hollow, & disfigured with white tumours, its roots spreading out like accipitrine eagles' claws grasping the ground. A chilly wind circled round them, upon whose currents the seeds of a neighbouring lime-tree, supported parachute-wise by the wing sail attached, flew out of the boughs downward like fledglings from their nest. The dale was wrapped in a dim atmosphere shade of unnaturalness, & the east was like a livid curtain edged with pink. There was no sign or sound of Fitzpiers.

"It is no use standing here," said her father. "He may come home fifty ways. .... Why, look here — here be Darlings tracks — turned homeward & nearly through the hard. He must have come hours ago & without your seeing him."

"He has not done that," said she.

They went back hastily. On entering their own gates they perceived that the men had left the waggons, & were standing round the door of the stable which had been appropriated to the doctor's use. "Is there anything the matter?" cried Grace.

"Oh no, ma'am. All's well that ends well", said old Timothy Tangs. "I've heard of such things before — amongst workfolk, though not among st-/gentle-people — that's true."

They entered the stable, & saw the pale shape of Darling standing in the middle of her stall, with Fitzpiers on her back, sound asleep. Darling was munching hay as well as she could with the bit in her mouth, & the reins, which had fallen from Fitzpiers's hand, hung upon her neck.

Grace went & touched his hand; shook it, before she could arouse him. He moved, started, opened his eyes, & exclaimed "Ah, Helice!..... Oh — it's Grace. I could not see in the gloom. What — am I in the saddle?"

"Yes," said she. "How do you come here?"

He collected his thoughts, & in a few moments stammered: "I was riding along homeward through the Vale, very sleepily, having been up so much of late. When I came opposite Holywell spring the mare turned her head that way as if she wanted to drink. I let her go in, & she drank; I thought she would never finish. While she was drinking the clock of Owlscombe church struck twelve; I distinctly remember counting the strokes. From that moment I positively recollect nothing till I saw you here by my side."

"The name! — if it had been any other horse he'd have had a broken neck!" murmured Melbury.

"'Tis wonderful, sure, how a quiet hoss will bring a man home at such times!" said, John Uppjohn. "And what's more wonderful than keeping your seat in a deep, slumbering sleep. I've knowed men drowze off walking home from randies where the mead & other liquors have gone round & evenbated well, & keep walking for more than a mile on end, without waking. Well, I don't care who the man is, doctor, 'tis a mercy you was'nt a drowned, or a splintered, or a hanged up to a tree like Absolom — also a handsome gentleman like yerself — as the prophets say."

"True," murmured old Timothy. "From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him!"

"— Or leastwise you might ha' been a-wounded into tatters a'most, & no doctor to few joine your limbs together within seven mile!"

Whilst this grim address was proceeding Fitzpiers had dismounted, & taking Grace's arm walked stiffly indoors with her. Melbury stood staring at the horse which, in addition to being very weary, was spattered with mud. There was no mud to speak of about the Hintocks just now — only in the clammy hollows of the Vale beyond Owlscombe, the stiff soil of which retained moisture for weeks after the uplands were dry. Whilst they were rubbing down the mare Melbury's mind coupled with the foreign quality of the mind the name he had unconsciously muttered by the surgeon when Grace took his hand — "Felice". Who was Felice? Why, Mrs Charmond; & she, as he knew, was staying at Middleton.

Melbury had indeed pounced upon the image that filled Fitzpiers's half-awakened soul — wherein there had been a picture of a recent interview on a lawn with

capriciously-passionate
a woman who had begged him not to come again in tones ~~that directly~~ whose vibration
incited him to ~~do so~~ disobey. "What are you doing here? Why do you pursue me? Another belongs to you. If they were to see you they would deem you as a thief!" And she had turbulently admitted to this wringing questioning ~~him~~ that her visit to Middleton had been undertaken less because of the invalid relative than in ~~mad~~ shamefaced fear of her own weakness if she remained near ~~him~~ his home. A triumph then it was (poor & hampered as he had become) to recognise his real Congreve's conquest of this beauty, & delayed so many years. His was no selfish passion of Millamant, ~~whose love was it less to lay in feeling~~ to whom love's supreme delight lay in seeing "that heart which others bleed for, bleed for me."

When the horse had been attended to ~~cared for~~ Mellory stood uneasily here & there about his premises; he was rudely disturbed in the comfortable views which he had lately possessed him on his domestic concerns. It is true that he had for some days ~~seemed~~ discerned that Grace more & more sought his company, prepared ~~sharing~~ supervising his & bakehouse the kitchen with her step-mother to ~~keeping her own apartments~~ occupying herself with the lighter details of her own apartments — ~~that, in sum~~. She seemed no longer able to find in her own hearth ~~& home~~ an adequate focus for her life, & hence, like a weak queen-bee after leading off to an independent home, had hovered again into the parent hive. But he had not construed these & other incidents of the kind till now.

Something was wrong in the dovecote. A ghastly sense that he

X. In the pure & simple life ~~that~~ he had led it had scarcely occurred to him that ~~a~~ after marriage a man might be faithless.

alone would be responsible for whatever unhappiness should be brought upon her for whom he almost solely lived; whom to retain under his roof he had faced the numerous inconveniences involved in giving up the best part of his house to Fitzpiers. There was no room for doubt that, had he allowed events to take their natural course, she would have accepted Winterborne, & realized his old dream of restitution to that young man's family.

That Fitzpiers could allow himself to look on any other creature for a moment than Grace filled Melbury with grief & astonishment. That he could sweep to the heights of Mrs Charmond's position, lift the veil of Isis, so to speak, would have amazed Melbury by its audacity if he had not suspected encouragement from that quarter. What could he of his simple Grace do to counterwail the passions of such as those — two sophisticated beings, versed in the world's ways, armed with every appurtenance for victory? In such an encounter the homely timber-dealer felt as inferior as a bow-&-arrow savage before the precise weapons of modern warfare.

Grace came out of the house as the morning drew on. The village was silent, most of the folk having gone to the fair. Fitzpiers had retired to bed, & was sleeping off his fatigue. She went to the stable & looked at poor Darling: in all probability Giles Winterborne, by obtaining for her a horse of such intelligence & docility, had been the means of saving her husband's life. She paused over the strange thought; & then there appeared her father, silently coming behind her. From the shadowed hollows of his brow eyes. She saw that he held

She saw his eye that he knew things were not as they ought to be, from the troubled dulness of his eye, & from his face, different points of which had independent motions, twitchings, & trembling, unknown to himself, & involuntary.

"He was detained I suppose last night," said Melbury.

"Oh yes; a bad case in the Vale," she replied calmly

"Nevertheless he should have stayed at home."

"But he could not, father."

Her father turned away. He could hardly bear to see this wilful & this truthful girl brought to the humiliation of having to talk like that.

That night carking care sat beside Melbury's pillow, & this sleep limbs tossed at its presence. "I can't lie here any longer," he muttered; & striking a light he wandered about the room. "What have I done, what have I done for her!" he said to his wife who had anxiously awakened. "I had long planned that she should marry the son of the man I wanted to make amends to — do ye mind how I told you all about it, Lucy, the night before she came home? Ah — but I was not content with doing right — I wanted to do more!"

"Don't reproach yourself without good need, George," she replied. "I won't quite believe that things are so much amiss. I won't believe that Mrs Charmond has encouraged him. Even supposing she has encouraged a great many, she can have no motive to do it now. What is likely as that she is not yet quite well, & doesn't care to let another doctor come near her?"

He did not heed.

"Grace used to be so busy every day with fixing a curtain here, &

driving a tin-tack there; but she cares for no employment now!"

"Do you know anything of Mrs Charmond's past history? – perhaps that would throw some light upon things. Before she came here (as the wife of old Charmond four or five years ago) not a soul seems to have heard aught of her. Why not make inquiries? and then do ye wait & see more – there'll be plenty of opportunity. Time enough to cry when you know 'tis a crying matter; & 'tis best to meet troubles half-way."

There was some good sense in the notion of seeing further. Melbury resolved to inquire, & wait – hoping still, but oppressed ~~against hope, and~~ between whiles with much fear.

Chapter XXX

Examine Grace as he further might, she would admit nothing. For the present therefore he simply watched.

The suspicion that his darling child was being slighted wrought almost a miraculous change in Melbury's nature. No man so fortune (for the time) as the candid ingenuous country man who finds that his confidence ingenuousness has been abused misplaced. Melbury's heretofore confidential candour towards his gentlemanly son-in-law was displaced by a feline stealth that did injury to his every action, thought, & word. He knew that a woman once given to a man for life took, as a rule, her lot & made the best of it, as it came without external interference; but for the first time he asked himself why this so generally should be so. Moreover this case was not, he argued, like ordinary cases. Leaving out the question of Grace being anything but an

ordinary women, her peculiar situation, as it were in mid-air between two planes of society; together with the loneliness of Hintlock, made a husband's neglect a far more tragical matter to her than it would be to one who had a large circle of friends to fall back upon. Wisely or unwisely, & whatever other fathers did, he resolved to fight his daughter's battle still.

Mrs Charmond had returned. But Hintlock House scarcely gave past signs of life, so quietly had she re-entered it. He went to church at Great Hintlock one afternoon as usual, there being no service at the smaller village. A few minutes before his departure he had casually heard Fitzpiers, who was no churchgoer, tell his wife that he was going to walk in the wood. Melbury entered the building & sat down in his pew; the parson came in, then Mrs Charmond, then Mr Fitzpiers

The service proceeded, & the jealous father was quite sure that a mutual consciousness uninterruptedly was maintained between those two; he fancied that more than once their eyes met. At the end Fitzpiers so timed his movement into the aisle that it exactly coincided with Felice Charmond's from the opposite side, & they walked out with their garments in contact, the surgeon being just that two or three inches in her rear which made it convenient for his eyes to rest upon her cheek. The cheek warmed up ~~rather than blushed~~ to a richer tone.

This was a worse feature in the situation than he had expected. If she had been playing with him in an idle freak the game might soon

X were two: ~~one~~ the first that she lived with no companion or relative about her, near ~~in the house~~, which, considering her age & ~~handsome~~ attractions, was somewhat unusual conduct for a young widow in a lonely country house; the other

have cleared her; but the smallest germ of passion — and women of the world do not change colour for nothing — was a threatening condition. The mere presence of Fitzpiers in the building, after his statement, was well nigh conclusive as far as he was concerned; but Melbury resolved yet to watch.

He had to wait long. Autumn drew to its end: one day something seemed to be gone from the gardens; the tenderer leaves of vegetables had shrunk under the first smart frost, & hung like faded linen rags; then the forest leaves which had been descending at leisure descended in haste & in multitudes, & all the golden colours that had hung overhead were now crowded together in a degraded mass underfoot, where the fallen myriads got redder, & hornier, & curled themselves up to rot. The only unusual features in Mrs Charmond's existence at this season was that she did not, as in previous years, start from Hintock to winter abroad. In Fitzpiers the only change from his last autumn's habits lay in the abandonment of night study: his lamp never shone from his new dwelling as from his old.

If the suspected ones met, it was by such adroit contrivances that even Melbury's vigilance could not encounter them together. A simple call at her house by the doctor was all had nothing irregular about it, & that he had paid two or three such calls was certain. What had passed at those interviews was known only to the parties themselves; but that Felice Charmond was under some one's influence Melbury soon perceived. had opportunity of

Winter had come on. Owls began to be noisy in the mornings & evenings

& flocks of wood-pigeons made themselves prominent again. One day in February, about six months after the meeting of Fitzpiers, Melbury was returning from Great Hintock on foot, through the lane when he saw before him the surgeon also walking. Melbury would have overtaken him, but at that moment Fitzpiers turned in through a gate to one of the rambling drives among the trees at this side of the wood, which led to nowhere in particular, & the beauty of whose serpentine curves were the only justification of their existence. Felice almost simultaneously trotted down the lane towards the timber-dealer, down in a little basket-carriage which he sometimes drove about the estate, unaccompanied either by a servant. She turned in at the same place without having seen Melbury or, apparently, Fitzpiers. Melbury was soon at the spot, despite his aches & his sixty years. ~~Fitzpiers~~ Mrs Charmond had come up with the doctor, ~~who~~ who was standing immediately behind ~~at the back of~~ the carriage. She had turned to him, her arm being thrown carelessly over the back of the seat. They looked in each other's faces without uttering a word, an arch yet gloomy smile wreathing her lips. Fitzpiers clasped her hanging hand, & while she still remained in the same listless attitude, looking volumes into his eyes, he stealthily unbuttoned her glove, & stripped her hand of it by rolling back the gauntlet over the fingers, so that it came off inside out. He then raised her hand to his mouth, she still reclining passively, watching him as she might have watched a fly upon her dress. At last she said, "Well, sir, what offence for this disobedience?" "I make none." "Then go your way, & let me go mine. She snatched away her hand, touched the pony with the whip, & left him standing there, holding ~~her~~ the recovered glove.

Chapter XXX continued.

Melbury's first impulse was to reveal his presence to Fitzpiers, & upbraid him bitterly, for his conduct. But a moment's thought was sufficient to show him the futility of any such simple proceeding. There was not, after all, so much in what he had witnessed, as in what that scene might be the the surface & froth of — probably a state of mind on which censure operates as an aggravation rather than as a cure. Moreover he said to himself that the point of attack should be the woman if either. He therefore kept himself out of sight, and ~~on his way indoors~~, musing sadly, even tearfully — for he was meek as a child in matters concerning his daughter — continued his way towards Hintock & kept by the near his house.

The insight which is bred of deep sympathy was never more finely exemplified than in this instance. Through her guarded manner, her dignified speech, her placid countenance, he discerned the interior of Grace's life only too truly, hidden as were its incidents from every outer general eye.

These incidents had become rampant enough. Fitzpiers had latterly developed an irritable discontent which vented itself in monologues when Grace was present to hear them. The early morning of this day had been dull, after a night of wind, & on looking out of the window Fitzpiers had observed some of Melbury's men dragging away a large limb which had been snapped off a beech tree. Everything was cold & colourless.

"My good Heaven!" he said as he stood in his dressing-gown. "This is life!" He did not know

whether Grace was awake or not, & he would not turn his head to ascertain it. "Ah, fool!" he went on to himself, "to clip your own wings when you were free to soar!... But I could not rest till I had done it. Why do I never recognise an opportunity till I have missed it, nor the good or ill of a step till it is irrevocable?..... I fell in love..... Love indeed!—

"'Love's but the frailty of the mind
When 'tis not with ambition joined;
A sickly flame which, if not fed, expires
And feeding, wastes in self-consuming fires!'"

Grace moved. He thought she had heard some part of this soliloquy. He was sorry — though he had not taken any precaution to prevent her.

He expected a scene at breakfast — but she only exhibited an extreme reserve. It was enough, however, to make him repent that he should have done anything to produce discomfort; for he attributed her manner entirely to what he had said. But Grace's manner had not its cause either in his sayings or in his doings. She had not heard a single word of his regrets. Something even nearer home than her husband's blighted prospects — if they were blighted — was the origin of her mood, a mood that was the mere continuation of what her father had noticed when he would have preferred a passionate jealousy in her as the more natural.

She had made a discovery; one which, to a girl of honest nature was almost appalling. She had looked into her heart, & found that her early ~~the both~~ evident interest in Giles Winterborne had become revitalized ~~with~~

~~her widening perceptions~~ into luxuriant growth by her widening perceptions of what was truly great & little in life. His homeliness no longer offended her acquired tastes; his comparative want of so-called culture did not now jar on her intellect; more his countrified even dress, pleased her eye; his exterior roughness fascinated her. Having discovered by marriage how much that was humanly not great could co-exist with attainments of an exceptional order, there was a revulsion in her sentiments from all that she had formerly clung to in this kind: honesty, goodness, manliness, tenderness, devotion, ~~true~~ for her ~~truth~~ only existed in their purity now in the breasts of unvarnished men; & here was one who had ~~shown all these~~ manifested them towards her from his youth up.

There was, further, that never ceasing pity in her soul for Giles as ~~one~~ a man whom she had wronged, a man who had been unfortunate in his worldly transactions; the while, not without ~~career, & had acquired~~ a touch of sublimity, he had borne ~~for having been~~ himself throughout his scathing ~~through it all~~

as one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing.

It was these perceptions, & no subtle catching of her husband's murmurs, that had bred the abstraction visible in her.

When her father approached the house after witnessing the interview between Fitzpiers and Mrs Charmond, Grace was looking out of her sitting-room window, as if she had nothing to do, or think of, or care for. He stood still. ["Ah, Grace," he said regarding her fixedly.

"Yes, father," she murmured.

"Waiting for your dear husband?" he inquired, speaking with the sarcasm of pitiful affection.

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"Yes, father," she murmured.

"Waiting for your dear husband?" he inquired, speaking with the sarcasm of

afternoon".

"Oh no – not especially. He has a great many patients to see this

Melbury came quite close. "Grace, what's the use of talking like that, when you know —. Here, come down & walk with me out in the garden, child." [He unfastened the door in the ivy-laced wall, & waited. This apparent indifference alarmed him. He would far rather that she had rushed in all the fire of jealousy to Hintock House, & stormed & confronted Felice Charmond & attacked ~~her~~ unguibus et rostro, (regardless of conventionality), & accused her even in the exaggerated shape of stealing away her husband. Such a storm might have cleared the air.

She emerged in a minute or two, & they met inside together. "You know as well as I do", he resumed, "that there is something threatening mischief to your life; & yet you pretend you do not. Do you suppose I don't see the trouble in your face every day? I am very sure that this quietude is very unusual in you. You should look more into matters."

"I am quiet because my sadness is not of a nature to stir me to action."

Melbury wanted to ask her a dozen questions: did she not feel jealous, was she not indignant; but a natural delicacy restrained him. "You are very tame & let-alone, I am bound to say," he remarked pointedly.

"I am what I feel, father," she repeated.

He glanced at her, & there returned upon his mind the scene of her offering to wed Winterborne instead of Fitzpiers in the last days

before her marriage; she asked herself if it could be the fact that she loved Winterborne now that she had lost him more than she had ever done when she was comparatively free to choose him.

"What would you have me do?" she asked in a low voice.

He recalled his mind from the retrospective pain to the practical matter before them. "I would have you go to Mrs Charmond," he said.

"Go to Mrs Charmond – what for?" said she.

"Well – if I must speak plain, dear Grace – to ask her, appeal to her in the name of your common womanhood, & [your many] sentiments on things, not to make unhappiness between you & your husband. It lies with her entirely to do one or the other – that I can see."

Grace's face had heated at her father's words, & every rustle of her skirts upon the box edging bespoke hauteur. "I shall not think of going to her, father – of course I could not!" she answered.

"Why – don't'ee want to be happier than you be at present?" said Melbury, more moved on her account than she was herself.

"I don't wish to be more humiliated. If I have anything to bear I can bear it in silence."

"But my dear ~~child~~ maid you are too young – you don't know what the present state of things may lead to. Just see the harm done a'ready! Your husband would have gone away to Budmouth to a bigger practice if it had not been for this. Although it has gone such a little way it

is poisoning your future even now. Mrs Charmond is thoroughly bad, not bad by calculation; ~~by~~ and just a word to her now might save 'ee a peck of woes."

"Ah – I loved her once," said Grace with a broken articulation; "and she would not care for me then! Now I no longer love her. Let her do her worst: I don't care."

"You ought to care. You have got into a very good position to start with. You have been well-educated, well tended, & you have become the wife of a professional man of ~~the~~ unusually good family. Surely you ought to make the best of your position."

"I don't see that I ought. I wish I had never got into it. I wish you had never, never thought of educating me. I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South. I hate genteel life, & I want to be no better than she."

"Why?" said her amazed father.

"Because cultivation has only brought me inconveniences & troubles. I say again, I wish you had never sent me to those fashionable schools you set your mind on. It all arose out of that, father. If I had stayed at home I should have married –" She closed up her mouth suddenly & was silent; & he saw that she was not far from crying.

Melbury was much grieved. "What endowed you like to have grown up as we be here in Hintock – knowing no more, & with no more chance of seeing good life than we have here?"

"Yes. I have never got any happiness outside Huntock that I know of, & I have suffered many a heartache at being sent away. Oh the misery of those January days when I had got back to school, & left you all here in the wood so happy. I used to wonder why I had to bear it. And I was always a little despised by the other girls at school, because they knew where I came from, & that my parents were not in so good a station as theirs."

Her poor father was much hurt at what he thought her ingratitude & intractability. He had admitted to himself bitterly enough that he should let young hearts have their way, or rather should have helped on her affection for Winterborne, & given her to him according to his first original plan; but he was not prepared for her deprecation of those attainments whose completion had been a labour of years, & a source of pride to lay upon his future.

"Very well", he said with much heaviness of spirit. "If you don't like to go to her I don't wish to force you."

And so the question remained for him still, how should he remedy this perilous state of things.

Chapter XXXI

As February merged in March, & lighter evenings broke the gloom of the woodman's homeward journey, the Huntocks Great & Little began to have ears for the timber-dealers trouble. It took the form of a rumour of the events out of which had grown

of a wide sprinkling of conjecture, ~~is~~ wherein no man knew the exact truth. Tantalizing phenomena, at once showing & concealing the real relationship of the persons concerned, caused a diffusion of excited surprise. Honest people as the world was then, it was hardly to be expected that they could ~~continue to~~ remain immersed in the study of their own affairs & gardens amid such circumstances, or sit with their backs turned like the good burghers of Coventry at the passage of the beautiful Lady.

Rumour, for a wonder, exaggerated little. There were, in fact, the well-worn incidents, old as the hills, (in this case as in ~~the~~ thousands, ~~like~~) which, with individual variations, made a mummer of Ariadne, a bye-word of Vashti, & a corpse of the Countess Amy. There were ~~private meetings~~ rencounters accidental & continued, stealthy correspondence, sudden misgivings on one side, sudden self-reproach on the other. The inner state of the two was one as of confused noise that would not allow the ~~voice~~ accents of calmer reason to be heard. Determinations to go in this direction, headlong plunges in that; dignified safeguards, undignified collapses; not a single rash step by deliberate intention, & all against judgment.

~~As the battle swayed between duty & desire her agitation at the prospect was~~ It was all that Melbury had expected & feared. ~~He understood~~ It was more, for he had overlooked the publicity that would be likely to result, as it now had done. ~~to arise~~ What should he do? Appeal to Mrs Charmond humbly, since

grace would not? He bethought himself of Winterborne, & resolved to consult him, feeling the strong need of some friend of his own sex to whom he might unbosom his mind.

He had entirely lost faith in his own judgment. That headpiece on which he had relied for so many years seemed recently, like a false companion, unmasked to have disclosed the depths of hypocrisy & [illegible] & spuriousness where all had seemed solidity. He felt almost afraid to form a conjecture on the matter, [illegible] or the time, or the fruit-promise, so great was his mistrust of himself & abasement.

It was a rimy evening when he set out to look for Giles. The wood seemed to be in a cold sweat; beads of perspiration hung from every bare twig; the sky had no colour, & the trees rose before him as haggard grey phantoms, whose days of substantiality were past. Melbury seldom saw Winterborne now, but he believed him to be occupying a lonely hut just beyond the boundary of Mrs Charmond's estate, though still within the circuit of the wood land. The timber merchant's thin legs stalked on through the pale damp scenery, his eyes on the dead leaves of last year; while every now & then a hasty "aye!" escaped his lips in reply to some bitter proposition.

His notice was attracted by a thin blue haze of smoke, behind which arose sounds of voices and chopping: bending his steps that way he saw Winterborne just in front of him. It just now happened that Giles, after being for a long time apathetic & unemployed, had become one of the busiest men in the neighborhood. It is often thus: we expect to find fallen friends lost sight of sitting; we discover them doing on fairly well. Without any solicitation, or desire for profit on his part,

he had been asked to execute during that winter a very large order for hurdles & other copse-ware, for which purpose he had been obliged to buy several acres of brushwood standing. He was now engaged in the cutting & manufacture of the same, ~~he proceeding~~ proceeding with the work daily like an automaton. The hazel tree did not belie its name to-day. The whole of the copse-wood where the mist had cleared returned the purest tints of that hue, amid which Winterborne himself was in the act of making a hurdle, the stakes being driven firmly into the ground in a row, over which he bent & wove the twigs. Beside him was a square compact pile like the altar of Cain, formed of hurdles already finished, which bristled on all sides with the sharp points of their stakes. At a little distance ~~were come~~ the men in his employ were assisting him to carry out his contract. Rows of copse-wood lay on the ground as it had fallen under the axe; & a shelter had been constructed near at hand in front of which burnt the fire whose smoke had attracted him. The air was so dank that the smoke hung heavy, & crept away amid the bushes without rising from the ground.

After wistfully regarding Winterborne awhile Melbury drew ~~came~~ nearer, & briefly inquired ~~of~~ how Giles came to be so busily engaged ~~doing that~~, with an undertone of slight surprise that Winterborne could go thriving even to this degree after being deprived of Grace. Melbury was not without emotion at the meeting, for Grace's affairs had divided them, & ended their intimacy of old times.

Winterborne explained just as briefly, without raising his eyes

from his occupation of chopping a bough that he held in front of him.

"It will be up in April before you get it all cleared," said Melbury.

"Yes – there, or there-abouts," said Winterborne, a chop of the bill-hook jerking ~~occurring in the middle of~~ the last word into two pieces.

There was another interval; Melbury still looked on, a chip from Winterborne's hook occasionally flying against the waistcoat & legs of his visitor, who took no heed ~~of the fact~~.

"Ah Giles – you should have been my partner. You should have been my son-in-law!" the old man said at last. "It would have been far better for her, & for me."

Winterborne saw that something had gone wrong with his former friend, & throwing down the switch he was about to intervene, he responded only too readily to the mood of the timber-dealer. "Is she ill," he said hurriedly

"No, no." Melbury stood without speaking for some minutes, & then, as though he could not bring himself to proceed, turned to go away.

Winterborne told one of his men to pack up the tools for the night & walked after Melbury. "Heaven forbid that I should seem too inquisitive sir," he said, "especially since we don't stand as we used to stand to one another; but I hope it is well with them all over your way."

"No," said Melbury, "no." He stopped, & struck the smooth trunk of a young ash-tree with the flat of his hand. "I would that his ear had been where that rind is!" he exclaimed; "I should have treated him to

little compared wi' what he deserves."

"Now", said Winterborne, "don't be in a hurry to go home. I've put some cider down to warm in my shed shelter here, & we'll sit & drink it & talk this over." [Melbury turned unresistingly as Giles took his arm, & they went back to the where the fire was, & sat down under the screen, the other woodmen having gone. ~~Giles~~ He drew out the cider-mug from the ashes, & they drank together. ["Giles you ought to have had her, as I said just now", ~~he~~ repeated Melbury. "I'll tell you why for the first time." [He thereupon told Winterborne, with great relief, the story of how he won away Giles's father's chosen one — by nothing worse than a lover's cadjoleries, it is true; but by means which, except in love, would certainly have been pronounced cruel & unfair. He explained how he had always intended to make reparation to Winterborne the father by giving Grace to Winterborne the son; till the devil tempted him in the person of Fitzpiers & he broke his virtuous vow.

"How highly I thought of that man, to be sure! Who'd have supposed he'd have been so weak & wrong-headed as this! You ought to have had her Giles, & there's an end on't."

Winterborne knew how to preserve his calm under this unconsciously cruel tearing of a healing wound, to which Melbury's concentration on the more vital subject had blinded him. ~~to of consequence~~. The young man endeavoured to make the best of the case, for Grace's sake. "She would have been happy with me," he said in his dry unimpassioned

voice under which he hid his feelings. "I was not well enough educated: too rough in short. I could not have surrounded her with the refinements she looked for, any how at all."

"Nonsense – you are quite wrong there", said the unwise old man doggedly. "She told me only this day that she hates refinements & such like. All that my trouble & money bought for her in that way is thrown away upon her quite. She'd fain be like Marty South – think o' that! That's the top of her ambition! Perhaps she's right. Giles, she loved you – under the rind; & what's more she loves ye still – worse luck for the poor maid!"

If Melbury only had known what fire he was recklessly stirring up he might have held his peace. Winterborne was silent a long time. The darkness had closed in round them, & the monotonous drip of the fog from the branches quickened as it turned to fine rain.

"Oh, she never cared much for me", Giles managed to say as he stirred the embers with a brand.

"She did, & does, I tell ye", said the other obstinately. "However, all that's vain talking now. What I came to ask you about is a more practical matter – how to make the best of things as they are. I am thinking of a desperate step – of calling on the woman Charmond. I am going to appeal to her, since Grace will not. 'Tis she who holds the balance in her hands – not he. While she's got the will to

lead him astray he will follow — poor unpractical lofty-notioned dreamer — & how long she'll do it depends upon her whim. Did ye ever hear anything about her character before she came to Hintock?"

"She's been a bit of a charmer in her time, I believe," replied Giles with the same level quietude, as he regarded the red coals. "One who has often smiled where she has not been loved, & loved where she has not married. Before Mr Charmond made her his wife she was a play-actress."

"Hey? But how close you have kept all this, Giles! What besides?"

Mr Charmond was a rich man engaged in the ~~cotton~~ iron trade in the north — twenty or thirty years older than she. He married her, & retired, & came down here & bought this property."

"Yes, yes — I know all about that. But the other I did not know. I fear it bodes no good. For how can I go & appeal to the forbearance of a woman in this matter who has made cross-loves & crooked entanglements her trade for years? I thank ye, Giles, for finding it out; but it makes my plan the harder that she should have belonged to that unstable tribe."

Another pause ensued, & they looked gloomily at the smoke that beat about the hurdles which sheltered them, through whose weavings a large drop of rain ever fell at intervals & spat smartly into the fire. Mrs Charmond had been no friend to Winterborne; but he was manly, & it was not in his heart to let her be condemned without a trial. "She is said to be generous," he answered. "You might not appeal to her in vain."

⁂ He was the more impelled to go at once by the absence of his son-in-law in London for a few days, to attend, really or ostensibly, some professional meetings.

"It shall be done," said Mellory rising. "For good, or for evil, to
Mrs Charmond I'll go."

Chapter XXXII

At nine o'clock the next morning Mellory dressed himself
up in shining broadcloth, creased & lined with folds, & smelling of camphor & lavender,
& started for Hintock House. He said nothing of his destination
either to his wife or to Grace, fearing that they might entreat him to
abandon so risky a project, & what out mistress. He had chosen
his time with a view, as he supposed, of conveniently catching Mrs Charmond
when she had just finished her breakfast, before any other business
people should be about, if any came. Plodding thoughtfully onward he
crossed a glade lying between Little Hintock woods & the plantation, and
strolled on the path, & the spot being open he was discerned there by
Winterborne from the copse on the next hill, where he & his men were
working. Knowing his mission he hastened down from
the copse & managed to intercept the timber-merchant at
"I have been thinking of this, sir," he said, "and I am of opinion
that it would be best to put off your visit for the present."

But Mellory would not stop to hear him. His mind was
made up; he appeal could be made; & Winterborne stood & watched
him desperately sadly as till he entered the second plantation & disappeared.

Mellory rang at the tradesmans door of the manor-house, &
was at once informed that the Lady was not yet visible, as indeed he

might have guessed had he been anybody but the man he was. Mellury said he would wait: whereupon the young man informed him in a neighbourly way that between themselves she was in bed & asleep.

"Never mind," said Mellury. "I'll stand about here," retreating into the court. Charged so fully with his mission he shrank both from contact with anybody.

But he walked about the paved court till he was tired, & still nobody came to him. At last he entered the house, & sat down in a small waiting-room, from which he could get glimpses of the kitchen-corridor, & of the white-capped maids flitting jauntily hither & thither. They had heard of his arrival, but had not seen him enter, & imagining him still in the court, discussed freely the possible reason of his calling. They marvelled at his temerity; for though most of the tongues which had been let loose attributed the chief blame-worthiness to Fitzpiers, these of her household preferred to regard their mistress as the deeper sinner.

Mellury sat with his hands resting on the familiar knobbed thorn walking-stick whose growing he had seen before he enjoyed its use. ~~Like a~~ ~~somnambulist~~ The scene to him was ~~waking~~ not the material environment of his person, but a tragic vision that travelled with him like an envelope. Through this vision ~~surrounding~~ the incidents of the moment but gleamed confusedly here & there, as an outer landscape through the high-coloured scenes of a stained window. He waited thus an hour, an

hour & half, two hours. He began to look pale & ill, whereupon the butler who came in asked him to have a glass of wine. Melbury roused himself & said "no, no. Is she almost ready?"

"She is just finishing breakfast", said the butler. "She will soon see you now. I am just going up to tell her you are here."

"What, have n't you told her before?" said Melbury.

"Oh no", said the other. "You see you came so very early."

At last the bell rang: Mrs Charmond could see him. She was not in her private sitting-room when he reached it, but in a minute he heard her coming from the front staircase, & she entered where he stood.

At this time of the morning Mrs Charmond looked her full age & more. She might almost have been taken for the typical femme de trente ans, though she was really not more than seven or eight-and-twenty. There being no fire in the room she came in with a shawl thrown loosely round her shoulders, & obviously without the least suspicion that Melbury had ~~come~~ called upon any other errand than timber. Felice was, indeed, the only woman in the parish who had not heard the rumour of her own weaknesses; she was at this moment living in a fool's paradise in respect of that rumour, though not in respect of the weakness ~~itself~~ as members, which if the truth be told, caused her grave misgivings.

"Do sit down Mr Melbury. You have nearly felled all the trees that were to be ~~cut~~ purchased by you this season, except the oaks, I believe."

"Yes, yes," said Melbury in a reverie. He did not take a chair, & she also remained standing. Resting upon his stick he began: "Mrs Charmond, I have called upon a more serious matter — at least to me — than tree-throwing. And whatever mistakes I make in my manner of speaking upon it to you, Madam, do me the justice to set 'em down to my want of practice, & not to my want of care."

Mrs Charmond looked ill at ease. She might have begun to guess his meaning; but apart from that she had such dread of contact with anything painful, harsh, or even earnest, that his preliminaries alone were enough to distress her. ~~Let~~ "Yes, what is it?" she said.

"I am an old man," said Melbury, "whom ~~God~~ somewhat late in life thought fit to bless with one child & she a daughter. Her mother was a very dear wife to me; but she was taken away from us when the child was young; & the child became precious as the apple of my eye to me, for she was all I had left to love. For her sake entirely I married as second wife a home-spun woman who had been kind as a mother to her. In due time the question of her education came on; & I said, 'I will educate the ~~child~~ maid well, if I live upon bread & do it.' Of her possible marriage I could not bear to think, for it seemed like a death that she should cleave to another man, & grow to think his house her home rather than mine. But I saw it was the law of nature that this should be; & that it was for the maid's happiness that she should have a home when I was gone: & I made up my

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mind without a murmur to help it on for her sake. In my youth I had wronged my dead friend & to make amends I determined to give her, my most precious possession to my friend's son seeing that they liked each other well. Things came about which made me doubt if it would be for my daughter's happiness to do this, inasmuch as the young man was poor, & she was delicately reared. Another man came & paid court to her — one her equal in breeding & accomplishments; in every way it seemed to me that he only could give her the home which her training had made a necessity almost. I urged her on, & she married him. But ma'am, a fatal mistake was at the root of my reckoning: I found that this well-born gentleman had calculated on so surely was ~~[illegible]~~ not staunch of heart, & that ~~here lay~~ therein lay a danger of great sorrow for my daughter. Madam, he saw you, & you know the rest.... I have come to make no demands, — to utter no threats; I have come simply as a father in great grief about this only child, & I beseech you to deal kindly with my daughter & to do nothing which can turn her husband's heart away from her for ever. Forbid him your presence ma'am, & speak to him on his duty as one with your power over him well can do: & I am hopeful ~~[illegible]~~ that the rent between them may be patched up. For it is not as if you would lose by so doing; your course is far higher than the courses of a simple professional man; & the gratitude you would win from me & mine by your kindness is more than I can say."

Mrs Charmond had first rushed into a mood of indignation, on comprehending Mellury's story: hot & cold by turns she had murmured, "Leave me, leave me!" But, as he seemed to take no notice of this, his words began to influence her, & when he ceased speaking she said with hurried, hot breath, "What has led you to think this of me? Who says I have won your daughter's husband away from her? Some monstrous calumnies are afloat — of which I have known nothing until now!"

Mellury started, & looked at her simply: "But surely, Ma'am, you know the truth better than I?"

Her features became a little pinched, & the touches of powder on her ~~face~~ handsome face for the first time showed themselves as an extrinsic film. "Will you leave me to myself?" she said with a faintness which suggested a guilty conscience. "This is so utterly unexpected — you obtain admission to my presence by misrepresentation —"

"As God's is in heaven, Ma'am, that's not true. I made no pretence; & I thought in reason you would know why I had come. This gossip —" "[" I have heard nothing of it. What Tell me of it, I say."

"Tell you ma'am, not I. What the gossip is, no matter. What really is, you know. Set facts right, & the scandal will right itself. But pardon me — I speak roughly; & I came to speak gently, to coax you, beg you, to be my daughter's friend. She loved you once Ma'am;

you began by liking her. Then you dropped her without a reason, & it hurt her warm heart more than I can tell you. But you were within your right as the superior, no doubt. But if you would consider her position now — surely surely you would do her no harm!"

"Certainly I would do her no harm — I —" Melbury's eye met hers. It was curious, but the allusion to Grace's former love for her seemed to touch her more than all Melbury's other arguments. "Oh Melbury," she burst out, "you have made me so unhappy! How could you come to me like this! It is too dreadful. Now go away — go, go!"

"I will," he said, in a husky tone.

As soon as he was out of the room she went to a corner & there rocked herself under an emotion in which hurt pride & vexation mingled with better sentiments.

Mrs Charmond's mobile spirit was subject to these fierce assaults of introspection. She had never so clearly perceived till now that her soul was being slowly invaded by a delirium which had brought about all this; that she was loosing judgment & dignity under it, becoming an animated impulse only, a passion incarnate. A fascination led her on: it was as if she had been seized by a hand of velvet; & this was where she found herself — overcast shadowed with sudden night, as if a tornado had passed by.

While she sat, or rather crouched, unhinged by the interview, lunch time came, & then the early afternoon, almost without her consciousness.

Then," a strange gentleman who says it is not necessary to give his name," was suddenly announced.

" I cannot see him, whoever he may be. I am not at home to anybody."

She heard no more of her visitor; & shortly after in an attempt to recover some mental serenity by violent physical exercise, she put on her ~~bonnet~~ hat & cloak & went out of doors, taking a path which led her up the slopes to the nearest spur of the wood. She disliked the woods, but they had the advantage of being a place in which she could walk comparatively unobserved

Chapter XXXIII

There was agitation to-day in the lives of all whom these matters concerned. It was not till the Huntock dinner-time — one o'clock - that Grace discovered her father's ~~departure~~ absence from the house after a departure in the morning under somewhat unusual conditions. By a little reasoning & inquiry she was able to ~~divine~~ come to a conclusion on his destination, & to divine his errand. (He had in truth gone on to Thertow after the interview, but this Grace did not know.)

Her husband was absent, & her father did not return. In an indefinite dread that something serious would arise out of Melbury's visit by reason of the irregularities of temper & nervous irritation to which he was subject, something possibly that would bring her much more misery than accompanied her present negative state of mind, she left the house about ~~two~~ three o'clock, & took a loitering walk in the wood-

land track by which she imagined he would come home. This track under the bare trees & over the cracking sticks, screened & roofed in from the outer world of wind & cloud by a network of boughs, led her gloomily on till in time she had left the larger trees behind her & swept round into the coppice where Winterborne & his men were clearing the undergrowth.

Had Giles's attention been concentrated on his bundles he would not have seen her; but ever since Melbury's passage across the opposite glade in the morning he had been ill at ease & unsettled & unhappy; & her present advent now was the one appearance which, since her father's avowal, could greatly disturb him more than Melbury's return with this long tidings. Fearing that something might be the matter he hastened up to her.

She had not been her old lover for a long time, & too conscious of the late pranks of her heart she could not behold him calmly. "I am only looking for my father," she said in an unnecessarily apologetic intonation.

"I was looking for him too," said Giles "I think he may perhaps have gone on further."

"Then you know he was going to the House Giles?" she said turning her large tender eyes anxiously upon him. "Did he tell you what for?"

Winterborne glanced doubtingly at her, & then softly hinted to her that her father had visited him the evening before, & that their old friendship was quite restored; on which she guessed the rest.

"Oh I am glad indeed that you two are friends again!" she cried.

And then they stood facing each other, fearing each other, troubling each other's souls. Grace experienced acute misery at the sight of these wood-cutting scenes, from because she had estranged herself from them, craving even for its defects & inconveniences that homely life of her father. which in the best probable succession of events would shortly be denied her.

At a little distance, on the edge of the clearing, Marty South was shaping spar-gads to take home for manufacture during the evenings. While Winterborne & Mrs Fitzpiers stood looking at her in their mutual embarrassment at each other's presence they beheld a lady approaching the girl. Lady in a fur mantle & a black hat having a white veil tied picturesquely round it. She spoke to Marty, who turned & curtsied, & the lady fell into conversation with her. It was Mrs Charmond.

On leaving her horse Mrs Charmond had walked on & covered under the fret & fever of her mind with more vigour than she was accustomed to show in her normal moods — a fever which the solace of a cigarette did not entirely allay. Reaching the coppice she threw away her cigarette, & came near. She had listened closely observed Marty at work, [illegible]. Chop, chop, chop, went Marty's little bill-hook with never more assiduity, till Mrs Charmond spoke.

"Who is that young lady I see talking to the wood-man yonder?" she asked.

"Mrs Fitzpiers, ma'am," said Marty.

"Oh" said Mrs Charmond, with something like a start; for she had not recognised Grace at that distance. "And the man she is talking to?"

"That is Mr Winterborne."

Harcus

A redness stole into Marty's face as she mentioned Giles's name, which Mrs Charmond did not fail to notice, with the almost supersensory means of knowledge which women have on such occasions, informed her of the state of the girl's heart. "Are you engaged to him?" she asked softly.

"No ma'am," said Marty. "She was once; & I think—"

But Marty could not possibly explain the complications of her thoughts on this matter—which was nothing less than one of extraordinary acuteness for a girl so young & inexperienced—namely, that she saw danger to two hearts naturally honest in Grace being thrown back into Winterborne's society by the neglect of her husband. Mrs Charmond however quite understood what Marty had intended to convey; & the picture thus exhibited to her of lives drifting awry, involving the wreck of poor Marty's hopes, prompted her to more generous resolves than all Melbury's remonstrances had been able to stimulate.

Full of the new feeling she bade the girl good-afternoon, & went on over the stumps of hazel to where Grace & Winterborne were standing. They saw her approach, & Winterborne said "She is coming to you: it is a good omen. She dislikes me, so I'll go away." He accordingly retreated to where he had been working before Grace came, & Grace's formidable rival approached her.

"Dear—Mrs Fitzpiers," said Felice Charmond with some inward turmoil which stopped her speech. "I have not seen you for a long time."

She held out her hand tentatively, while Grace stood like a wild animal on first confronting a mirror or other strange product of civilization. "Was it really Mrs Charmond speaking to her thus? If it was she could no longer form any guess as to what life ~~was~~ signified.

"I want to talk to you," said Mrs Charmond imploringly, ~~For~~ for the gaze of the young woman had chilled her through. "Can you walk on with me till we are quite alone?"

Sick with distaste Grace nevertheless complied, as by clockwork, & they moved evenly side by side into the deeper recesses of the woods. They went further, much further than Mrs Charmond had meant to go; but she could not begin her conversation, & in default of it kept walking.

"I have been your father," she at length resumed. "And – I am much troubled by what he told me."

"What did he tell you? I have not been admitted to his confidence on ~~any point whatever of~~ anything he may have said to you."

"Nevertheless, why should I repeat to you what you can easily divine."

"True – true," returned Grace mournfully. "Why should you repeat what we both know ~~to exist~~ to be in our minds already."

"Mrs Fitzpiers, your husband –" The moment that the speaker's tongue touched the dangerous subject a vivid look of self-consciousness flashed over her; in which her heart revealed, as by a lightning gleam, what filled it to overflowing. So transitory

was the expression that none but a sensitive woman, of the same sex in Grace's position, would have had the power to catch its meaning. Upon her the phrase was not lost.

"Then you do love him!" she exclaimed in a tone of much emphasis.

"What do you mean, my young friend?"

"Why," cried Grace, "I thought till now that you had only been cruelly flirting with my husband, to amuse your idle moments – a rich lady with a poor professional gentleman whom in her heart she despised not much less than her who belongs to him. But I guess from your manner that you love him desperately; & I don't hate you as I did before. – Yes, indeed," continued Mrs Fitzpiers with a trembling tongue, "since it is not playing in your case at all, but real – O I do pity you, more than I despise you. For you will suffer most!"

Mrs Charmond was now as much agitated as Grace. "I ought not to allow myself to argue with you" she exclaimed. "I demean myself by doing it. But I liked you once, & for the sake of that time I try to tell you how mistaken you are!" Much of her confusion resulted from her wonder & alarm at finding herself in a sense dominated mentally & emotionally by this simple school-girl. "I do not love him," she went on with desperate untruth. "It was a kindness – my making somewhat more of him than one usually does of one's doctor. I was lonely; & I talked – well, I trifled with him. I am very sorry

if such child's playing out of pure friendship has been a serious matter to you. Who could have expected it? But the world is so simple here".

"O that's expectation," said Grace shaking her head. "It is no use - you love him. I can see in your face that in this matter of my husband you have not let your acts belie your feelings. During these last four or six months you have been terribly indiscreet; but you have not been insincere; & that almost disarms me."

"I have been insincere - if you will have the word - I mean I have coquetted, & do not love him!"

But Grace clung to her position like a limpet.

"You may have trifled with others; but him you love as you never loved another man."

"Oh, well - I won't argue" said Mrs Charmond, laughing faintly. "And you come to reproach me for it, child."

"No," said Grace magnanimously. "You may go on loving him if you like - I don't mind at all. You'll find it, let me tell you, a bitterer business for yourself than for me in the end. He'll get tired of you soon, as tired as can be - you don't know him so well as I - & then you may wish you had never seen him!"

Mrs Charmond had grown quite pale & weak under this prophesy. It was extraordinary that Grace, whom almost everyone would have characterized as a gentle girl, should be of stronger fibre than her interlocutor. "You exaggerate -

-cruel, silly young woman," she ~~said~~ reiterated writhing with ~~infinite~~ little agonies. It is nothing but playful friendship - nothing. It will be proved by my future conduct. I shall at once refuse to see him more - since it will make no difference to my heart, & much to my name."

"I question if you will refuse to see him again," said Grace drily, as she bent a sapling down. she added, abandoning the tree to its natural perpendicular. "But I am not incensed against you as you are against me," "Before I came I had been despising you for wanton cruelty; now I only pity you for misplaced affection. When Edgar has gone out of the house in hope of seeing you, at seasonable hours & unseasonable; when I have found him riding miles & miles across the country at midnight, & risking his life, & getting covered with mud, to get a glimpse of you, I have called him a foolish man - the plaything of a finished coquette. I thought that what was getting to be a tragedy to me was a comedy to you. But now I see that tragedy lies on your side of the situation no less than on mine, & more; that if I have felt trouble at my position, you have felt anguish at yours, that if I have had disappointments you have had despairs. Heaven may pity me - God help you!"

"I cannot attempt to reply to your raving eloquence," returned he other, aiming to restore a dignity which had completely collapsed. "My acts will be my proofs. In the world which you have seen nothing of friendships between men & women are not unknown, & it would have been better both for you & your father if you had each judged me more respectfully,

& left me alone. As it is I wish never to see or speak to ~~either of~~ you madam any more."

Grace bowed, & Mrs Charmond turned away. The two went apart in directly opposite courses; & were soon hidden from each other by their umbrageous surroundings & by the shadows of eve.

In the excitement of their long argument they had walked onward & zigzagged about without regarding direction or distance. All sound of the wood-cutters had long since faded into remoteness, & even had not the interval been too great for hearing them they would have been silent & homeward bound at this twilight hour. But Grace went on her course without any misgiving, though there was much undergrowth here, ~~between which~~ with only the narrowest passages ~~existed~~ for walking, across which brambles hung. She had not, however, traversed this the wildest part of the wood since her childhood, & the transformation of outlines had been great; ~~the~~ old trees which once ~~had been~~ were landmarks had been felled or blown down, & the bushes which then had been small & scrubby were now large & overhanging. She soon found that her ideas as to direction were vague — that she had, indeed, no ideas as to direction at all. If the evening had not been growing so dark, & the wind had not put on its night moan so distinctly Grace would not have minded; but she was rather frightened now, & began to strike across hither & thither in random ~~tracks~~ courses.

Denser grew the darkness, & still no recognisable outline of more distinctly developed the wind-voices, spot or outlet
any kind appeared, nor any sound of the Hintocks, though she hoped
wandered
~~walked~~ pitifully between one & two hours, & began to be weary. She
was vexed at her foolishness, since the ground she had covered, if in
a straight line, must inevitably have taken her out of the wood to
some remote village or other; but she had wasted her forces in counter-
marches; & now in much alarm wondered if she would have to pass
the night here. She stood still to meditate, & fancied that between
the soughing of the wind she heard shuffling footsteps on the leaves heavier than
those of ~~night~~ rabbits or hares. Though fearing at first to meet any-
body on the chance of his being a friend she decided that the fellow poacher
night-rambler, even if a poacher, would not injure her, & that he
might just possibly be someone sent to search for her. She accordingly
shouted a rather timid "Hoi!"

The cry was immediately returned by the other person; & Grace
running
~~ran~~ at once in the direction whence it came ~~& beheld~~ beheld an indis-
tinct figure hastening up to her as rapidly. They were almost in each
other's arms when she recognised in ~~the darkness~~ her vis-à-vis the outline & white
veil of ~~Mrs Charmond~~ her whom she had parted from an hour & half before
– Mrs Charmond.

"I have ~~am~~ lost, I am lost, my way, I have lost my way!" cried that lady. "Oh – is it indeed you? I am so
glad to meet you or anybody. I have
~~I~~ been wandering up & down ever since we parted, & am nearly dead
with terror & misery & fatigue!"

"So am I" said Grace. "What shall we shall we do?"

"You won't go away from me?" asked her companion anxiously.

"No indeed — I want to Are you very tired?"

"I can scarcely move, & I am scratched dreadfully above the ancles."

Grace reflected. "Perhaps, as it is dry underfoot, the best thing for us to do would be to sit down for half an hour, & then start again when we have thoroughly rested. By walking straight we must come to a track leading somewhere, before the morning.

They found a clump of bushy hollies which afforded a shelter from the wind, & sat down under it, some tufts of dead fern, crisp & dry, that remaining from the previous season forming a sort of nest for them. But it was cold nevertheless on this March night, particularly for Grace who, with the sanguine premature[ness] of youth in matters of ~~clothing~~ dress had considered it springtime, & hence was not so warmly clad as Mrs Charmond, who still wore her winter fur ~~a fur mantle~~. But after sitting awhile the latter lady shivered no less than Grace as the warmth imparted by her hasty walking began to go off; & they felt the cold airs drawing through the holly leaves which scratched their backs & shoulders. Moreover they could hear some drops of rain falling on the ~~bringing with them a few drops of rain~~ trees, though none reached the nook in which they had ensconced themselves.

"If we were to cling close together" said Mrs Charmond, "we should keep each other warm. But," she added in an uneven ~~unequal~~ voice, "I suppose you won't come near me for the world!"

"Why not?"
"Because – well, you know."
"Yes I will – I don't hate you at all."

They consequently crept up to one another, & being in the dark, & lonely & weary, did what neither had dreamed of doing beforehand, clasped each other closely, Mrs Charmond's furs consoling Grace's cold face, and the heaving each one's body as she breathed ~~the undulation of each~~ alternately ~~to pressure with~~ against that of her companion.

When a few minutes had been spent thus Mrs Charmond said "I am so wretched!" in a heavy emotional whisper.

"You are frightened" said Grace kindly. "But there is nothing to fear: I know these woods well."

"I am not at all ~~more than~~ frightened at the wood, but I am at other things." Mrs Charmond embraced Grace more & more tightly, & the young woman could feel her neighbour's breathings grow deeper & more spasmodic, as though uncontrollable feelings ~~a violent emotion~~ were germinating. "After I had left you," she went on, "I regretted something I had said. I have to make a confession – I must make it!" she whispered brokenly, the instinct to indulge in warmth of sentiment which had led this woman of passions to respond to Fitzpiers in the first place leading her now to find luxurious comfort in opening her heart to his wife. "I said to you I could give him up without pain or deprivation – that he had only been my pastime. That was untrue – it was said to deceive you. I could not do it without much pain; & what is

more dreadful I cannot give him up – even if I would – of myself alone."

"Why? Because you love him, you mean."

Felice
Miss Charmond denoted assent by a movement.

"I knew I was right," said Grace. "But that should not deter you," she presently added in a moral tone. "O do struggle against it, & you will conquer!"

"You are so simple, so simple!" cried Felice. "You think, because you guessed my assumed indifference to him to be a sham, that you know the extreme that people are capable of! But a good deal more may have been going on than you have fathomed with all your insight. I cannot give him up, until he chooses to give up me."

"But surely you are the superior in station & in every way, & the cut must come from you?"

~~Tutte~~ "Tchut! Must I tell verbatim, you simple child? O, I suppose I must! I shall eat out my heart if I do not reveal all, after ~~for~~ meeting you like this & finding how guileless you are. She thereupon whispered a few words in Mr Girls ear, & burst into a violent fit of sobbing.

Grace started roughly away from the shelter of the fur, & sprang to her feet. "O my God!" she exclaimed thunderstruck ~~horrified~~ at a revelation transcending her utmost suspicion. "Can it be – can it be!"

She turned as if to hasten away. But Felice Charmonds sobs came to her ear: deep darkness circled her about, & she did not know

which way to go. After a moment of energy she felt mild again, & turned to the motionless woman at her feet.

"Are you rested? she asked, in what seemed her own voice from ten years older.

Without an answer Mrs Charmond slowly rose. "You mean to betray me!" she said from the bitterest depths of her soul. "O fool, fool I!"

"No" said Grace, shortly ~~quickly~~: "I mean no such thing. "But let us be quick now. We have a serious undertaking before us. Think of nothing but going straight on."

They walked on in profound silence, pulling back boughs & treading down woodbine, but still keeping a pretty straight course. Grace began to be thoroughly worn out, & her companion too when, on a sudden, they broke into the deserted highway at the hill top, on which ~~the coconut~~ the man had waited for Mrs Dollery's van. Grace recognised the spot as soon as she looked around her.

"How we have got here I cannot tell," she said with cold civility. "We have made a complete circuit of Little Hintock. The Lazel copse is quite on the other side. Now we have only to follow the road."

They dragged themselves onward, turned into the lane, passed the track to Little Hintock, & so reached the park. "Here I turn back" said Grace in the same passionless voice. "You are quite near home."

Mrs Charmond stood inert, seeming appalled by her admission. "I have told you something in a moment of ~~weakness~~ irresistible desire to unburden my soul which all but a fool

would have kept silent as the grave," she said. "I cannot help it now. Is it to be a secret, or ~~such~~ do you mean war?"

"A secret, certainly," said Grace mournfully. "How can you expect war from such a helpless wretched being as I!"

"And I'll do my best not to see him. I am his slave; but I'll try."

Grace was naturally ~~generous~~ kind; but she could not help using a small dagger now. "Pray don't distress yourself," she said with exquisitely fine scorn. "You may keep him — for me." Had she been wounded instead of mortified she could not have used the words; but Fitzpiers's hold upon her heart was slight.

They parted thus & there, & Grace went wearily homeward. Passing Marty's cottage she ~~was surprised to see~~ observed through the window that the girl was writing instead of chopping as usual, & wondered what her correspondence could be. Directly afterwards she met people in search of her, & reached the house to find all in serious alarm. She soon explained that she had lost her way; & the general depression was attributed to exhaustion on that account.

Could she have known what Marty was writing she would have been surprised. The rumour had reached the young girl, & she was penning a letter to Fitzpiers, to tell him that Mrs Charmond wore her hair. It was poor Marty's only card, & she played it, knowing nothing of fashion, & thinking her revelation a fatal one for a lover.

Chapter XXXIV.

It was at the beginning of April, a few days after the ~~afore~~said meeting between Grace & Mrs Charmond in the wood, that Fitzpiers, just returned from London, was travelling ~~driven~~ from Sherton-Abbes to Hintock in a hired carriage. In his eye there was a doubtful light, & the lines of his refined face showed a vague disquietude. He appeared now like one of those who impress the beholder as having suffered wrong in being born.

His position was in truth gloomy, & to his impressionable mind it seemed even gloomier than it was. His practice had been slowly dwindling of late, & now threatened to die out altogether, the irrepressible old Doctor Jones capturing patients up to Fitzpiers's very door. Fitzpiers knew only too well the latest & greatest cause of his unpopularity; & yet, so illogical is man, the second branch of his sadness grew out of a remedial measure proposed for the first — a letter from Felice Charmond, imploring him not to see her again. To bring about their severance — she added, still more effectually, she had decided during his absence ~~(she entertained)~~ upon almost immediate departure for the Continent.

The time was that dull interval in a woodlander's life which coincides with great activity in the life of the woodland itself — a period following the close of the winter wood-cutting, & preceding the barking season, when the saps are just beginning to heave unitedly, ~~united~~ with the force of hydraulic lifts, inside all the trunks of the forest.

Winterborne's contract was completed, & the plantations were deserted. There were no leaves as yet:
It was dusk: & the nightingales would not begin to sing for a fortnight; and "the mother of the months" was in her most attenuated phase — starved & bent to a mere bowed skeleton, which presently glided along behind the bare twigs in Fitzpiers's company.

When he reached home he went straight up to his wife's sitting-room. He found it deserted, & without a fire. He had mentioned no day for his return; nevertheless he wondered why she was not there waiting to welcome him. On descending to the other wing of the house to enquire of Mrs Melbury he learnt with much surprise that Grace had gone on a visit to an acquaintance at Shottsford-Forum, three days earlier; that tidings had on this morning reached her father of her being very unwell there, in consequence of which he had ridden over to see her.

Fitzpiers went upstairs again, & the little drawing-room, now lighted by a solitary candle, was not rendered more cheerful by the entrance of Grammer Oliver with an apron full of wood, which she threw on the hearth while she raked out the grate & rattled about the fire-irons, with a view to making things comfortable. Fitzpiers considered that Grace ought to have let him know her plans more accurately before leaving home in a freak like this. He went desultorily to the window, the blind of which had not been pulled down, & looked out at the thin, fast-sinking moon, & at the tall stalk of smoke rising from the top of Luke Dawson's chimney, signifying that

the young woman had just lit her fire to prepare supper. He became conscious of a discussion in progress on the opposite side of the court ~~in the lower part of the house~~. looked over the wall to talk to the sawyers, Somebody had ~~entered to Miss Melbury~~, & was telling them in a loud voice news in which the name of Mrs Charmond soon arrested his ears.

"Grammer, don't make so much noise with that grate," said the surgeon; at which Grammer reared herself upon her knees & held the fuel suspended in her hand, while Fitzpiers went to the door.

"She is off to foreign lands again at last — her mind made up quite ~~"She was just walking across the lawn into the house, between light and~~ sudden-like — & it is thought she'll leave in a day or two. She's been ale as if ~~dark, in a manner of speaking, & a man stepped out from a Portuguese~~ her mind were low for some days past — with a sort of sorrow in her face, as ~~tame, & began to babble wrong her, & recall her but everything, & yet~~ if she reproached her own soul. She's the wrong sort of woman for Hintock — ~~in a manner of love, as may be; & then he took her by the arm, & hardly knowing a beech from a woake — that I own. But I don't care who the man declared she should go to foreign parts with him there & then, & so~~ is, she's been a very kind friend to me."

~~else he'd blow his brains out. Well, she screamed, & the servants came, & the man went off. She was so frightened that she fainted~~

"Well — the day after to-morrow is the Sabbath day, & without charity we are but tinkling simples; but this I do say, that her going will be a ~~away. They say it is the foreign gentleman who has been here before~~ blessed thing for a certain married couple who remain."

~~one of her sparks, & a great admirer by all account — leastwise that's as 'twas told me~~".

The fire was lighted, & Fitzpiers sat down in front of it, restless ("a sort of sorrow in her face, as if she reproached her own soul". Poor Felice, as the last leaf upon a tree). ~~The incident of which he had just heard~~ ~~the caricature~~ ~~entered there~~ ~~the evening must have passed about 6 before this time, & it~~ ~~is the evening~~ (under the conditions ~~state~~ of which he had just heard ~~from~~ the caricature;) how Felice's frame must be pulsing (how her ~~temples~~ fair temples must ache, what a mood of wretchedness she must be in! — ~~thinking that he, having~~

(this mixing up of his name with hers, and too close) But for her determination to sunder their acquaintance on that account, she would probably have sent for him professionally, ~~since the unhinged as she must have been by the interview.~~ Fitzpiers knew all about the thunder. Felice had often told him of a little freak of flirtation she had indulged in while abroad, & how bitterly she had repented her levity in displeasing the South Carolinian; little supposing him such inflammable tinder as he was what inflammable ingredients that cosmopolite was made of. She was now sitting alone, suffering, perhaps wishing she had not forbidden him to come again.

Unable to remain in this lonely room any longer, or to wait for the meal which was in course of preparation, he made himself ready for riding, descended to the yard, stood by the stable-door while Darling was being saddled, & rode off down the lane. He would have preferred walking, but was weary with his day's travel.

As he approached the door of Marty South's cottage, which it was necessary to pass on his way, she came from the porch as if she had been awaiting him, & met him in the middle of the road, holding up a letter. Fitzpiers took it without stopping, & asked over his shoulder from whom it came. [Marty hesitated. "From me," she said shyly, though with noticeable firmness.

This letter contained, in fact, Marty's declaration that she was the original owner of Mrs. Charmond's supplementary locks, & enclosed a sample from the native stock, which had grown considerably by this time. It was her long contemplated apple of discord, & much her hand trembled as she handed the document up to him.

But it was impossible on account of the gloom for Fitzpiers to read

it then, while he had the curiosity to do so, & he put it in his pocket. His imagination having already centred itself on Hintock House, in his pocket the letter remained unopened & forgotten, all the while that Marty was hopefully picturing its excellent weaning effect upon him.

He was not long in reaching the precincts of the Manor House. He drew rein under a group of dark oaks commanding a view of the front, & reflected awhile. His entry would not be altogether unnatural in the circumstances of her possible indisposition; but upon the whole he thought it best to avoid riding up to the door. By silently approaching he could retreat unobserved in the event of her not being alone. Thereupon he dismounted, hitched Darling a stray bough hanging a little below the general browning line of the trees, & proceeded to the door on foot.

In the meantime Melbury had returned from Shottsford Forum. The great court or quadrangle of the timber-merchant's house, divided from the shady lane by an ivy-covered wall, was entered by two white gates, one standing near each extremity of the wall. It had so happened that at the moment when Fitzpiers was riding out at the lower gate on his way to the Manor-House, Melbury was approaching the upper gate to enter it. Fitzpiers being in front of Melbury was seen by the latter, but the surgeon, never turning his head, did not observe his father-in-law ambling slowly & silently along under the trees, though his horse too was a grey one.

"How is Grace?" said his wife as soon as he entered.

~~Dubb~~ Melbury looked gloomy. "She is not at all well," he said. "I don't like the looks of her at all. I could nt bear the notion of her biding away in ~~that~~ a strange place any longer, & I ~~for~~ begged her to let me get her home. At last she agreed to it, but not till after much persuading. I was then sorry that I rode over instead of driving; but I have hired a nice comfortable carriage — the easiest-going I could get — & she'll be here in a couple of hours or less. I rode on ahead to tell you to get her room ready; but I see her husband has come back."

said Mrs Melbury. She expressed her concern that her husband had hired a carriage

"Yes." ~~What have you hired~~ all the way from Shottsford. "What it will cost she said

"I don't care what it costs," he exclaimed testily. "I was determined to get her home. Why she went away I can't think! ~~Leo~~ She acts in a way that is not at all likely to mend matters as far as I can see." (Grace had not told her father of her interview with Mrs Charmond, & the disclosure that had been whispered in her startled ear)

"Since Edgar is come," he continued, ~~he~~ me might have waited in till I got back, to ask how she was, if only for a compliment. I saw him go out, where is he gone?"

Mrs Melbury did not know positively; but ~~she could guess,~~ and She told her husband that there was not much doubt about the place of his first visit after an absence. She had, in fact, seen Fitzpiers take the direction of the Manor House. ~~by the flutter into which the village had been thrown by the peremptory conduct of Dare some former lover of Mrs Charmond's.~~

Melbury said no more. It was exasperating to him that just at this moment, when there was every reason for Fitzpiers to stay in-doors, or at any rate to ride along the Shottsford road to meet his ~~wife~~ ailing wife, he should be doing despite to her by going elsewhere. The old man went out

out of doors again; & his horse being hardly unsaddled as yet, he told Upjohn to re-tighten the girths, & when he again mounted, & rode off at the heels of the surgeon.

By the time that Wellbury reached the park he was prepared to go any length in ~~redressing~~ combating this rank & reckless errantry of his daughter's husband. He would fetch home Edgar Fitzpiers to-night by some means, rough or fair: there could come of his interference in this view nothing worse than ~~the state~~ ~~as they were~~ what existed at present. And yet to every bad there is a worse. He had entered by the bridle-gate which admitted to the park on this side, & cantered over the soft turf almost in the tracks of Fitzpiers's horse till he reached the clump of trees under which his precursor had halted. The whitish object that was indistinctly visible here in the gloom of the boughs he found to be Darling, as left by Fitzpiers.

"Why did he not ride up to the house in an honest way?" said Wellbury.

He profited by Fitzpiers's example; dismounting he tied his horse under an adjoining tree, & went on to the house on foot as the other had done. He was no longer disposed to stick at trifles in his investigation, & did not hesitate to gently open the front door without ringing. The large square hall, with its oak floor, staircase, & wainscot, was lighted by a dim lamp hanging from a beam. Not a soul was visible. He went into the corridor & listened at a door which he knew to be that of the drawing-room; there was no sound, & on turning the handle he found the room empty. A fire burning low in the grate was the sole light of the apartment; its beams flashed mockingly on the somewhat showy Versaillese & gilding furniture here, in style unlike as of the structural parts that of the build-

⁂ The comparative stateliness of the apartments influenced him to an emotion, rather than a belief, that where all was outwardly so good & proper there could not be ~~so much~~ quite that delinquency within which he had supposed.

ing as it was possible to be, & probably introduced by Felice to counteract the gloom of the fine old-English place. Disappointed in his hope of confronting his son-in-law here he went on to the dining-room; this was without light or fire, & pervaded by a cold atmosphere which signified that she had not dined there that day.

By this time Melbury's mood had a little mollified. Everything here was so peaceful, so unaggressive in its repose, that he was no longer disposed to provoke a collision with Fitzpiers & with any body. It occurred to him, too, that even if his suspicion were justified, his abrupt & not unwarrantable entry into the house might end in confounding its inhabitant at the expense of his daughter's dignity & his own. any ill result would be pretty sure to hit Grace hardest in the long run. He would, after all, adopt the more rational course, & plead with Fitzpiers privately, as he had pleaded with Mrs Charmond.

He accordingly retreated as silently as he had come. Passing the door of the drawing-room anew he fancied that he heard a noise within which was not the crackling of the fire. Melbury gently re-opened the door to a distance of a few inches, & saw at the opposite window two figures in the act of stepping out — a man & a woman, in whom he recognised the lady of the house & his son-in-law. In a moment they had disappeared amid the gloom of the lawn. He returned into the hall, & let himself out by the carriage-entrance door, coming round to the lawn front in time to see the two figures parting at the railing which divided the precincts of the house from the open park. Mrs Charmond turned to and hastened back immediately that Fitzpiers had left her side; & he was speedily absorbed into the duskiness of the trees.

Melbury waited till Mrs Charmond had re-entered the drawing-room, & then followed after Fitzpiers, thinking that he would allow the latter to mount and ride ahead a little way before overtaking him & giving him a piece of his mind. His son-in-law might possibly see the second horse near his own; but that would do him no harm, & might prepare him for what he was to expect. [The event however, was different from the plan. On plunging into the thick shade of the clump of oaks he could not perceive his horse Blossom, but feeling his way carefully along, he by & by discerned Fitzpiers's mare Darling still standing as before under the adjoining tree. For a moment Melbury thought that his own horse, being young & strong, had broken away from her fastening; but on listening intently he could hear her ambling comfortably along a little way ahead, & a creaking of the saddle which showed that she had a rider. Walking on as far as the small gate in the corner of the park he met a labourer, who, in reply to Melbury's inquiring if he had seen any person on a grey horse, said that he had only met Dr. Fitzpiers.

It was just when Melbury had begun to suspect: Fitzpiers had mounted the mare horse which did not belong to him in mistake for his own — an overnight easily explicable in a man ever unwitting in horse-flesh by the darkness of the spot, & the near similarity of the animals in appearance, though Melbury's was readily enough seen to be the greyer horse by day. He hastened back & did what seemed best in the circumstances — got upon old Darling & rode rapidly after Fitzpiers.

Melbury had just entered the wood, & was winding along the cart-way which led through it, channelled with large deep ruts in the clay-mould, that were formed

X. How this fall had come about was ~~obvious enough~~ readily conjecturable: Fitzpiers, imagining there was only ~~he had had~~ old Darling under him, had been taken unawares by the younger horse's sprightliness, ~~& being no horseman had been thrown.~~

by the timber-waggons (in fetching the spoil of the ~~forest~~ plantations), when all at once he ~~discerned~~ descried in front, at a point where the road took a turning round a large chestnut tree, the form of his own horse Blossom, at which Melbury quickened Darling's pace, thinking to come up with Fitzpiers. Nearer view revealed that the horse had no rider. At Melbury's approach it gallopped away under the trees in a homeward direction. ~~Melbury~~ thinking something was wrong the timber-merchant dismounted as soon as he reached the chestnut, ~~reached the chestnut before Fitzpiers dismounted, thinking something was wrong~~ & after peering about for a minute or two discovered Fitzpiers lying on the ground. ["]Here — help,["] cried the latter as soon as he felt Melbury's touch; "I have been thrown off, — but there's not much harm done I think."

Since Melbury could not now very well read ~~him~~ the young man the lecture he had intended, his instinct was ~~not~~ to speak a single word to his son-in-law. He raised Fitzpiers (who was pig-headedness would be hypocrisy, not sitting a sitting-posture; ~~he~~ and found that he was ~~who seemed~~ a little stunned & stupefied, but, as he had said, not otherwise hurt. Melbury was a traveller of the old-fashioned sort; having just come from Shottsford Forum he still ~~he still~~ had in his pocket the pilgrim's bottle flask of rum which he always carried on journeys exceeding a dozen miles (though he seldom drank much of it), & He poured the surgeon's throat, with such effect that he quickly instantly revived. Melbury got him (it down) on his legs; but the question was what to do with him. He could not walk more than a few steps, & the other horse had gone away.

With great exertion Melbury contrived to get him astride Darling, mounting himself behind & holding Fitzpiers round his waist with one arm, Darling being ~~strong broad & dorsal he was quite able to~~ broad, straight-backed, & high in the withers, & was well able to carry double, at any rate as far as Hintock, & at a gentle pace.

Chapter XXXV.

The mare ~~Darling~~ paced along with firm & cautious tread through the copse

where Winterborne had worked, & into the heavier soil where the oaks grew; past Great Willy, the largest oak in the wood, & thence towards Nellcombe Bottom, intensely dark now with overgrowth, & popularly supposed to be haunted by the spirits of the patricides exorcised from Hintock House. By this time Fitzpiers was quite recovered as to physical strength. But he had eaten nothing since making a hasty breakfast in London that morning, his anxiety about Felice having hurried him away from home before dining: as a consequence the old rum administered by his father-in-law flew to the young man's head & loosened his tongue, without his ever having recognised who it was that had lent him a kindly hand. He began to speak in desultory sentences, Melbury still supporting him.

"I've come all the way from London to-day", said Fitzpiers. "Ah, that's the place to meet your equals. I live at Hintock – worse, at Little Hintock, and I am quite lost there. There's not a man within ten miles of Hintock who can comprehend me. I tell you, Farmer What's-your-name, that I'm a man of education. I know several languages: the poets & I are familiar friends: I used to read more in metaphysics than anybody within fifty miles; & since I gave that up there's nobody can meet me in the whole county of Wessex as a scientist. ~~investigation~~ ~~for I have taken knowledge~~. Yet I am doomed to live with tradespeople in a miserable little hole like Hintock!"

"Indeed!" muttered Melbury.

Fitzpiers, increasingly energized by the alcohol, here reared himself up suddenly from the bowed posture he had hitherto held, thrusting his shoulders so violently against Melbury's breast as to make it difficult for the old man

to keep a hold on the reins. "People don't appreciate me here!" the surgeon exclaimed; lowering his voice he added softly & slowly, "except one — except one!.... A passionate soul, as warm as she is clever, as beautiful as she is warm, & as rich as she is beautiful. — I say, old fellow, those claws of yours clutch me rather tight — rather like ~~those of the~~ me eagle's, you know, that ate ~~who eat~~ out the liver of Pro—Prometheus the man on Mount Caucasus. — People don't appreciate me, I say, except her. Ah, gods, I am an unlucky man! She would have been mine, she would have taken my name; but unfortunately it cannot ~~must can't~~ be so. I stooped to mate beneath me; & now I rue it."

The position was becoming a very trying one for Melbury, corporeally & mentally. He was obliged to steady Fitzpiers with his left arm, & he began to hate the contact. He hardly knew what to do. It was ~~would be~~ useless to remonstrate with Fitzpiers, in his ~~in the~~ intellectual confusion from the rum from the fall. He remained silent, his hold upon his companion, however, being stern rather than ~~friendly~~ compassionate

"You hurt me a little, farmer. Though I am much obliged to you for your kindness. — People don't appreciate me, I say. Between ourselves. I am losing my practice here; & why? Because I see matchless attraction where matchless attraction is, both in person & position. — I mention no names, so nobody pile be the wiser — But I have lost her, in a legitimate sense, that is. If I were a free man now, things have come to such a pass that (she could not refuse me; while with her fortune (which I don't covet for itself) I should have a chance of satisfying an honourable ambition — a chance

X. he cried with a quivering lip. "And the money of ~~mine~~ hers that you've had,
& the roof ~~of mine owns that~~ we've provided to shelter ye! — It is to me, ~~~~

I have never had yet, & now never never shall have probably!"

Melbury, his heart throbbing against the other's backbone, his brain on fire with indignation, ventured to mutter huskily "Why?"

The horse ambled on some steps before Fitzpiers replied. "Because I am tied & bound to another by law, as tightly as I am to you by your arm — not that I complain of your arm — I thank you for helping me. — Well, where are we? Not nearly home yet?.... Home, say I. It is a home! When I might have been at the other house over there." In a stupefied way he flung his hand in the direction of the park. "I was just two months too early in committing myself. Had I only seen the other first —"

Here the old man's arm gave Fitzpiers a convulsive shake.

"What are you doing?" continued he latter. "Keep still, please, or put me down. — I was saying that I had lost her by a mere little two months! There is no chance for me now in this world, & it makes me reckless — reckless! Unless, indeed, anything should happen to the other one. She is amiable enough; but if anything should happen to her — & I hear she is ill — well, if it should, I should be free — & my fame, my happiness, would be ensured."

These were the last words that Fitzpiers uttered in his seat in front of the timber-merchant. Unable longer to master himself Melbury drew the skin of his face together, whipt away his spare arm from Fitzpiers's waist, & seized him by the collar. "You heartless villain! — after all that we have done for ye! — "

The exclamation was accompanied by a powerful swing from the shoulder which flung the young man headlong into the road.

Fitzpiers fell with a heavy thud upon the stumps of some undergrowth which had been cut during the winter preceding. Darling continued her walk for a few paces further, & stopped. "God forgive me!" Melbury murmured, repenting of what he had done. "He tried me too sorely; & now perhaps I've murdered him!"

He turned round in the saddle, & looked towards the spot on which Fitzpiers had fallen. To his great surprise he beheld the surgeon rise to his feet with a bound, as if unhurt, ~~pick up his hat~~, & walk away rapidly under the trees.

Melbury listened till the rustle of Fitzpiers's footsteps died away. "It might have been a crime, but for the mercy of Providence in providing leaves for his fall!" he said to himself. And then his mind reverted to the words of Fitzpiers, & his indignation so mounted within him that he almost wished the fall had put an end to the young man there & then.

He had not ridden far when he discerned his own grey mare standing under some bushes. Leaving Darling for a moment Melbury went forward & easily caught the younger animal, now disheartened ~~disquieted~~ at ~~disquieted with~~ its freak. ~~He~~ He then made the pair of them fast to a tree, & ~~going~~ turning back on foot endeavoured to find some trace of Fitzpiers, feeling pitifully that, after all, he had gone further than he intended with the offender. But though he thrashed the wood hither & thither, his toes ploughing ~~the layers of~~ layer after layer of the little horny scrolls that had once been leaves, he could not find him. He stood still listening & looking round.

The breeze was oozing through the network of boughs as through a strainer; the trunks & larger branches stood against the light of the sky in the forms of writhing men, gigantic candelabra, pikes, halberds, lances, & whatever besides the fancy chose to make of them. Giving up the search Mellury came back to the horses, & walked slowly homeward leading one in each hand.

[White line]

It happened that on this selfsame evening a boy had been returning from Great to Little Hintock about the time of Fitzpiers's & Melbury's passage along that road. He was bringing back a horse-collar, that had been left at the harness-mender's to be repaired, & was required for use at nine o'clock next morning; & in consequence the boy had to fetch it overnight. He had put his head through the collar, & was accompanied his walk by whistling the one tune he knew, as an antidote to fear.

The boy suddenly became aware of a horse trotting rather briskly along the track behind him, & not knowing whether a respectful friend or foe prudence suggested that he should cease his whistling & retreat among the trees till the horse & his rider had gone by, a course to which he was still more inclined when he saw that the horse looked pale, & remembered what he had read about Death in the Revelation. He therefore found how noiselessly they approached, & deposited the collar by a tree, & hid himself behind it. The horseman came on, & the youth, whose eyes were as keen as telescopes, & his great relief recognised the doctor.

As Melbury had surmised, Fitzpiers had in the darkness taken Blossom

for darling, & he had not discovered his mistake when he came up ~~with~~ opposite the boy. Though he was somewhat surprised at the ~~sprightliness~~ liveliness of his usually placid mare. The only other pair of eyes on the spot ~~that was~~ whose vision was as keen as the ~~cattle~~ young carter's were those of the horse; & with that strongly conservative objection to the unusual which animals show, Blossom, on eyeing the collar under the tree – quite invisible to Pitzpiers – ~~& having~~ exercised none of the patience of the older ~~the~~ horse, but shied sufficiently to unseat so second-rate an equestrian as the surgeon! He fell, & did not move, lying as Melbury afterwards found him. The boy ran away, salving his conscience for the desertion by thinking how vigorously he would spread the alarm of the accident when he got to Hintock – which he uncompromisingly did, ~~& with exaggerated particulars~~ interesting the event with dramatic horrors.

Grace had returned, & the fly ~~had been~~ hired on her account, though not by her husband, ~~had been~~ at the Crown Hotel, Sholtsford Forum, & had been paid for & dismissed. The long drive had somehow revived her, her illness being ~~mental~~ a ~~breaker~~ feverish intermittent nervousness which had more to do with mind than body, & she walked about her sitting-room in something of a hopeful mood. Mrs Melbury had told her as soon as she arrived that her husband had returned from London. He had gone out, she said, to see a patient as she ~~believed~~ supposed, & he ~~would~~ must soon be back, since he had had no dinner or tea. Grace would not allow her mind to harbour any suspicion of his whereabouts, & her step-mother said nothing of Mrs Charmond's ~~visit that day~~ sorrows, & removed plans for departure.

⁂ She had left Hintock ~~home~~ in a turmoil of feeling, after the revelation of Mrs. Charmond, intending not to be at home when her husband returned. But she had thought the matter over, & had allowed her father's influence to prevail and bring her back; & now somewhat regretted that Edgar's arrival had preceded hers.

So the young wife sat by the fire, waiting silently. By & by Mrs Melbury came upstairs with a slight air of flurry & abruptness. "I have something to tell you – some bad news" she said. "But you must not be alarmed, as it is not so bad as it might have been. Edgar has been thrown off his horse. We don't think he is hurt much. It happened in the wood on the other side of Hellcombe Bottom, where the ghosts walk, 'tis said." She went on to give a few of the particulars, but none of the more horrible ones had been communicated by the boy. "I thought it better to tell you at once", she added, "in case he should not be very well able to walk home, & somebody should bring him."

Mrs Melbury really thought matters much worse than she represented, & Grace knew that she thought so. She sat down dazed for a few minutes, returning a negative when her step-mother inquired if she could do anything for her. "Go into the bedroom", she said, "& see if all is there – in case it is serious. But please, on second thoughts, all is ready." Mrs Melbury thereupon called Grammer, & they did as directed, supplying the room with everything they could think of for the accommodation of an injured man.

Nobody was left in the lower part of the house. Not many minutes had passed when Grace heard a knock at the door – a single knock, not loud enough to reach the ears of those in the bedroom. She went to the top of the stairs, & said faintly "Come up." Knowing that the door stood, as usually in such houses, wide open. Retreating into the gloom of the broad landing she saw rise up the stairs a woman whom at first she did not recognize, till her voice revealed her to be Suke Damson, in great fright & sorrow. Her hands were clasped. A streak

of light from the partially closed door of Grace's room fell upon her face as she came forward; & it was drawn & pale.

"Oh Miss Melbury – I ~~mean~~ would say Mrs Fitzpiers", she said wringing her hands "This terrible news – Is he dead? Is he hurted very bad? Tell me! I could not help coming – please forgie me Miss Melbury – Mrs Fitzpiers I would say!"

Grace sank down on the oak chest which stood on the landing, & put covered her hands to her now flushed face & head. Could she order Suke Damson downstairs out of the house? Her husband might be brought in ~~to the~~ at any moment, & what would happen? But could she order this genuinely grieved woman away? There was a dead silence of ~~a~~ half minute or so, till Suke said "Why don't ye speak? Is he here? Is he dead? If so, why can't I see him – would it be too very wrong?"

Before Grace had answered somebody else came to the door below – a footfall light as a roe's. There was a hurried tapping upon the panel, as if with the tips of impatient fingers whose owner thought, whether ~~the umbrella or knees~~ were not sufficient a knocker there or no. Without a pause, & promptly guided by the stray beam of light on the landing, the new comer ascended the staircase as the first had done. Grace was sufficiently visible, & the lady, for a lady it was, came to her side.

"I could not help hearn downstairs", said Felice Charmond with lips whose dryness could almost be heard, & panting, as she stood like one ready to sink on the floor with distress. "What is – the matter – tell me the worst!" She looked at Grace imploringly, without perceiving how Can he live?"

Sake, who, dismayed at such a presence, had shrunk away into the shade. Mrs Charmond's little feet were covered with mud; she was quite unconscious of her appearance now. "I have heard such a dreadful report," she went on. "I came to ascertain the truth of it. Is he – killed?"

"She will tell us – he's dying – he's in that room!" burst out Sake, regardless of consequences, as the heard the distant movements of Mrs Melbury & Grammer in the bedroom at the end of the passage

"Where?" said Mrs Charmond; & on Sake pointing out the direction she made as if to go thither.

Lady Grace barred the way. "He is not there", she said. "I have not seen him any more than you. I have heard a report only – not so bad as you think. It must have been exaggerated to you."

"Please do not conceal anything – let me know all!" said Felice doubtingly.

"You shall know all I know – you have a perfect right to know – who can have a better?" said Grace with a delicate sting which was lost upon Felice Charmond now. "I repeat, I have only heard a less alarming account than you have heard – how much it means, & how little, I cannot say. In common humanity I pray God that it means not much (in common humanity) – & you probably pray the same – for other reasons." She regarded them both there in the dim light. They stood dumb in their trouble, not heeding her mood, not stinging back at her; A tenderness spread over Grace like a dew. It was well, very well, conventionally, to address either one of them in the wife's regulation terms of virtuous sarcasm, as woman, creature, or thing, for loving their husband. But

life, what was it, & who was she? She had been plagued & chastened all the day long; but could she, not please by retributive words, in order to please herself the individual, "offend against the generation", as deprecated by the singer of the Psalm of Asaph? had said?

"He is dying, perhaps!" blubbered Suke Damson, putting her apron to her eyes.

In their gestures & faces there were anxieties, affection, agony of heart — all for a man who had wronged them — had never really behaved towards either of them any how but selfishly. Neither one but would have well-nigh sacrificed any half her life to him, even now. The tears which his possibly critical situation could not bring to her eyes surged over at the contemplation of these fellow-women. She turned to the balustrade, bent herself upon it, & wept, without using her handkerchief and letting the tears run down silently. covered her face to

Thereupon Felicia began to cry also. While these three poor women stood together, two, pitying another while most to be pitied themselves, the pacing of a horse or horses became audible in the court, & in a moment Melbury's voice was heard calling to his stableman. Grace at once started up, ran down the stairs, & out into the quadrangle as her father crossed it towards the door. "Father — what is the matter with him!" she cried.

"Who — Edgar?" said Melbury abruptly. "Matter? Nothing. — What, my dear, & have you got home safe? Why you are better already! But you ought not to be out in the air like this."

"But he has been thrown off his horse!"

"I know — I know. I saw it. He got up again, & walked off.

– a fall on the leaves didn't hurt a spry fellow like him as well as ever. He did not come this way," he added significantly. "I suppose he went to look for his horse. I tried to find him, but I could not. But after seeing him go away I undertakers I found the horse, & have led it home for safety. So he must walk. Now, don't you stay out here in this night air."

She returned to the house with her father. When she had again ascended to the landing & to her own rooms beyond, it was a great relief to her to find that both Petticoat the First & Petticoat the Second of her Bien-aimé had silently disappeared. They had in all probability heard the words of her father, & ~~felt~~ departed with their anxieties relieved.

Presently her parents came up to Grace, & busied themselves to see that she was comfortable. Perceiving soon that she would prefer to be left alone they went away.

Grace waited on. The clock raised its voice now & then, but her husband did not return. At her father's usual hour for retiring he again came in to see her. "Do not stay up," she said, as soon as she entered. I am not at all tired. I will sit up for him."

"I think it will be useless, Grace," said Melbury slowly.

"Why?"

"I have had a bitter quarrel with him. And on that account I hardly think he will return to-night."

"A quarrel? Was that after the fall seen by the boy?"

Melbury nodded an affirmative – without taking his eyes off the candle.

"Yes – it was as we were coming home together," he said.

Something had been swelling up in Grace while her father was speaking. "How could you want to quarrel with him!" she cried suddenly. "Why could you not let him come home quietly, if he were inclined to? He is my husband; & now you have married me to him surely you need not provoke him unnecessarily. First you induce me to accept him; & then you do things that divide us more than we should naturally be divided!"

"How can you speak so unjustly to me, Grace!" said Melbury, with indignant sorrow. "I divide you from your husband, indeed! You little think—"

He was inclined to say more – to tell her the whole story of the encounter, & that the provocation he had received (on hearing her despised. But it would have greatly had lain entirely distressed her; & he forebore. "You had better lie down – you are tired," he said, soothingly "Good-night."

The household went to bed, & a silence fell upon the dwelling, broken only by the occasional skirr of a halter in Melbury's stables. Despite her father's advice Grace still waited up. But nobody came.

It was a critical time in Grace's emotional life, that night. She thought of her husband a good deal, & for the moment forgot Winterborne. "How these unhappy women must have admired Edgar!" she said to herself. "How attractive he must be to every body – & indeed, he is attractive." The possibility just then – is that, piqued by rivalry, these ideas might have been transformed into their corresponding emotions by a show of the least reciprocity in Fitzpiers. There was, in truth, a love-bird yearning to fly from her heart; & it wanted a lodging badly.

"[illegible] it was as we were coming home together," he said. He was reduced to say more to tell her the whole story of the encounter; but it would have distressed her greatly, she decided. "You had better lie down — you are tired," he added, [illegible]

[illegible] But no husband came. The fact

The truth was that Mellersy had been much mistaken about the condition of Fitzpiers. People do not fall headlong on stumps of underwood with impunity. Had the old man been able to watch Fitzpiers narrowly enough he would have observed that, one rising to walking into the thicket, he dropped blood as he went; that he had not proceeded fifty yards before he showed signs of being dizzy, & raising his hands to his head, reeled & fell down.

Chapter XXXVI.

Grace was not the only one who watched & meditated in Hintock that night. Felice Charmond was in no mood to retire to rest at a customary hour; & over her drawing-room fire at the Manor House she sat as motionless and in as deep a reverie as Grace in her little room at the homestead.

Having caught ear of Mellersy's intelligence while she stood on the landing at his house, & been eased of much of her mental distress, her sense of personal decorum returned upon her with a rush. She descended the stairs & left the house like a ghost, keeping close to the walls of the building till she

got round to the gate of the quadrangle, through which she noiselessly passed
almost
[the] [gone] [had] [finished] their discourse. Luke Damon
had
thought it well to imitate her superior in this respect, & descending the
back stairs as Felicia descended the front,
went out at the back door & home to her cottage.
side
One outside Shellbury's gates.

Mrs Charwood ran with all her speed to the Manor House, splashing her
thin boots in her haste (without stopping or turning her head, &) She entered her
own dwelling as she had emerged from it — by the drawing-room window. In
at undertaking such an unpre-
other circumstances she would have felt some humidity from the turbid ~~event~~
meditated excursion alone; ~~If her rejected~~
~~must had occurred between her other adventure shortly earlier in the evening~~
for another
; but her anxiety had cast out her fear for herself

Everything in her drawing-room was just as she had left it — the casement
the candles still burning,
closed, the shutters gently pulled to, so as to hide the state of the window from
apartment
the cursory glance of a servant entering the ~~room~~. She had been gone about
three-quarters of an hour by the clock, & nobody seemed to have discovered
her absence. Tired in body but tense in mind she sat down, palpitating,
round-eyed,
~~sat the picture rate~~ bewildered at what she had done.

She had been betrayed by her emotion into a visit which, now that the
instigating it had
emotion ~~had been~~ calmed down under her belief that Fitzpiers was in no
the saddest
danger, was of surprise to her. This was how she had set about doing her
escape ~~utmost~~ her passionate bondage to
best to ~~break off the intimacy interest in~~ him! Somehow, in declaring to Grace
unseemliness of her infatuation
& to herself the ~~unlovely beauty of her shameful passion~~ she had grown a convert
to its irresistibility. If Heaven would only give her strength; but Heaven

never did. One thing was indispensable; she must go away from Hintock if she meant to withstand further temptation. The struggle was too wearying, too hopeless, while she remained. It was but a continued capitulation of conscience to what she dared not name.

By degrees, as she sat, Felice's mind — helped perhaps by the anti-climax of learning that her lover was unharmed after all — grew wondrously strong in wise resolve. For the moment she was in a mood, in the words of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, "to run mad with discretion"; & hers so pervaded that discretion lay in departure, that she wished to set about going that very minute & jumping up from her seat she began to gather together some small personal knicknacks scattered about the room, to feel that preparations were really in train.

While moving here & there she fancied that she heard a slight noise out of doors; & stood still. Surely it was a tapping at the window. A thought entered her mind, & burnt her cheek. He had come to that window before; yet was it possible that he should dare to do so now! All the servants were in bed, & in the ordinary course of affairs she would have retired also. Then she remembered that on stepping in by the casement & closing it she had not fastened the window-shutter, so that a streak of light from the interior of the room might have revealed her lucubration to an observer on the lawn. How all things conspired against her keeping faith with Grace! The tapping, light as from the bill of a little bird, recommenced; her illegitimate hope cast out her fear; she went & pulled back the shutter, determining however to shake her

Green.

(at ~~at~~ him head) & keep the casement securely closed.

What she saw outside might have struck terror into a heart stouter than a helpless woman's at midnight. In the centre of the ~~square~~ lowest pane of the window, close to the glass, was a human face, which she barely recognised as the face of Fitzpiers. It was surrounded with the darkness of the night without, corpse-like in its pallor, & covered with blood. ~~He~~ as ~~framed~~ disclosed in ~~panelled~~ the square pane area of the pane it met her frightened eyes like a replica of the ~~napkin~~ Sudarium of St. Veronica.

He moved his lips, & looked at her imploringly. Her rapid mind pieced together in an instant a possible ~~the probable~~ concatenation of events which might have ~~had~~ led to this tragical issue. The unlatched ~~opened~~ the casement with an impulsive ~~a trembling~~ hand, & bending down to where he was crouching ~~pressed~~ assisted him into the room without a word, to do which it was almost necessary to lift him bodily. Quickly closing the window & fastening the shutters she bent over him breathlessly -

"Are you hurt much, much?" she ~~said~~ whispered faintly. "Oh, Oh, how is this!"

"Rather much - but don't be frightened," he ~~said~~ answered in a difficult whisper, & turning himself to obtain an easier position if possible "A little water, please."

She ran across into the dining-room, & brought a bottle of wine, from which he eagerly drank. He could then speak much better, & with her help got upon the nearest couch.

"Are you dying, Edgar?" she said. "Do speak to me!"

"I am half dead," said Fitzpiers. "But perhaps I shall get over it.... It is chiefly loss of blood."

"But I thought yourself did not hunt you?" said she. "Who did this?"

"Felice – my father-in-law!... I have crawled to you more than a mile on my hands & knees – God, I thought I should never have got here!.... I have come to you because you are the only friend I have in the world now. .... I can never go back to Hintock – never – to the roof of the Melburys!.... Not poppy nor mandragora will ever medicine that bitter feud!... If I were only well again –"

"Let me bind your head, now you have rested."

"Yes – but wait a moment – it has stopped bleeding, fortunately, or I should be a dead man before now. While in the wood I managed to make a tourniquet of some halfpence & my handkerchief, as well as I could in the dark.... But listen, dear Felice! Can you hide me till I am well? Whatever comes, I can be seen in Hintock no more. My practice is nearly gone you know – & after this I would not care to recover it if I could."

By this time Felice's tears began to blind her. Where were the now discreet plans for sundering their lives for ever? To administer to him in his pain, and trouble, & poverty, was her single thought. The first step was to hide him, & she asked keenly where. A place occurred to her mind.

She got him some wine from the dining-room, which strengthened him much. Then she managed to remove his boots, & as he could now keep himself upright by leaning upon her on one side & walking-stick on the other, they went thus in slow march out of the room & up the stairs. At the top she took him along a gallery, pausing whenever he required rest, & thence up a smaller staircase

to the least used part of the house, where she unlocked a door. Within it was a lumber-room, containing abandoned furniture of all descriptions, built up in piles which obscured the light of the windows, & formed between them nooks & lairs in which a person would not be discerned even should an eye gaze in at the door. The articles were mainly those that had belonged to the previous owner of the house, & had been bought in by the late Mr Charmond at the auction; but changing fashion, & the tastes of a gouty wife, had caused them to be relegated to this dungeon. Poor Hintock

Here Fitzpiers set on the floor against the wall till she had hauled out materials for a bed, which she spread on the floor in one of the aforesaid nooks. She obtained water & a basson, & washed the dried blood from his face & hands; & when he was comfortably reclining fetched food from the larder.

While he ate her eyes lingered anxiously on his face, following its every movement with such loving kindness as only a woman can show.

He was now in better condition, & discussed his position with her.

"What I (fancy I) saw to Melbury must have been enough to enrage any man, if uttered in cold blood, & with knowledge of his presence. But I did not know him, & I was stupefied by what he had given me, so that I hardly was aware of what I said. Well – the veil of that temple is rent in twain!..... As I am not going to be seen again in Hintock, my first efforts must be directed to allay any alarm that may be felt at my absence, before I am able to get clean away. Nobody must suspect that I have been hunt, or there will be a country talk about me.

Felice, I must at once concoct a letter to check all search for me. I think if you can bring me ad pen & paper I may be able to do it now. I could rest better if it were done. Poor thing – how I tire her with running up & down!"

She fetched writing-materials, & held up the blotting-book as a support to his hand, while he penned a brief note to ~~Lydia~~ his nominal wife.

"The animosity shown towards me by your father", he wrote in this coldest of marital epistles, "is such that I cannot return again to a roof which is his, even though it shelters you. A parting is unavoidable, as you are sure to be on his side in this division. I am starting on a journey which will take me a long way from Hintock, & you must not expect to see me there again for some time."

He then gave her a few directions bearing upon his professional engagements & other practical matters, concluding without a hint of his destination, or a notion of when she would see him again. He offered to read the note to Felice before he closed up it up; but she would not hear of it: that side of their situation distressed her beyond endurance. She turned away from Fitzpiers, & sobbed bitterly.

"If you can get this ~~conveyed to~~ posted at ~~some~~ a place some miles away," he whispered, exhausted by the effort of writing. "At Shottsford, or Port-Bredy, or Castlebridge, a still better, Budmouth, it will divert all suspicion from this house as the place of my refuge."

"I will drive to one or other of the places myself – anything to keep it unknown!" she murmured, her voice weighted with vague foreboding, now that the excitement of helping him had passed away.

Fitzpiers told her that there was yet one thing more to be done. "In creeping over the fence on to the lawn," he said, "I made the rail bloody, & it shows rather much on the white paint – I could see it in the dark. At all hazards it should be washed off. Could you do that also, Felice?"

What will not women do on such devoted occasions? Weary as she was she went – all the way down the rambling staircases to the ground floor, then to search for a lantern, which she lighted & hid under her cloak; then for a wet sponge, & next forth into the night. The white railing stared out from the darkness at her approach, & a ray of the ~~shuttered~~ enshrouded lantern fell upon the blood – just where he had told her it would be found. She shuddered. It was almost too much to bear in one day – ~~at that~~ but with a shaking ~~trembling~~ hand she sponged the rail clean, & returned to the house.

The time occupied by these several proceedings was not much less than two hours. When all was done, & she had placed every thing within his reach that she could think of, ~~smoothed his extemporized bed, and~~ she took her leave of him & locked him in.

Chapter XXXVII.

When her husband's letter reached Grace's hands, bearing upon it the post-mark of a distant town, it never once crossed her mind that Fitzpiers was within a mile of her still. She felt relieved that he did not write more bitterly of about the quarrel with her father, whatever its nature might have been; but the general frigidity of his communication quenched in her the incipient spark that

events had kindled so shortly before.

From this centre of information it was made known in Hintock that the doctor had gone away, & as none but the Melbury household were aware that he did not return on the night of his accident, no excitement manifested itself in the village.

Thus the early days of May passed by, & none but the nocturnal birds & animals were aware that late one evening, towards the middle of the month, a closely wrapped figure with a crutch under one arm & a stick in his hand, crept out from Hintock House across the lawn to the shelter of the trees, taking thence a slow & laborious walk to the nearest point of the turnpike road. The mysterious personage was so disguised that his own wife would hardly have known him. Felice Charmond was a practised hand at make-ups, as well she might be; & she had done her utmost in padding & painting. Fifty years with the old materials of her trade in the recesses of the lumber-room.

In the highway he was met by a covered carriage, which conveyed him to Sherton Abbas, whence he proceeded to the nearest port on the south coast, & immediately crossed the Channel.

But it was known to everybody that three days after this time Mrs Charmond executed her long-deferred plan of setting out for a long term of travel & residence on the Continent. She went off one morning as unostentatiously as could be, & took no maid with her, having she said, engaged one to meet her at a point further on in her route. After that Hintock House, so frequently deserted, was again to be left. Spring had not merged in summer

when a clinching rumour, founded on the best of evidence, reached the ~~county~~ parish & neighbourhood. Mrs Charmond & Fitzpiers had been seen together in Baden, in relations which set at rest the question that had agitated the little community ever since the winter.

Melbury had entered the Valley of Humiliation & his spirits seemed broken even sunkener than Grace.

But once a week he mechanically went to market as usual, & here, as he was passing by the conduit one day, his mental condition expressed largely by his gait, he heard his name spoken by a voice formerly familiar. He turned & saw a certain Fred Beancock – once a ~~lad~~ promising lawyer's clerk & local dandy, who had been called the cleverest fellow in Sherton, without whose brains the firm of solicitors employing him would be nowhere. But later on Beancock had fallen into the mire. He was invited out a good deal, sang songs at Agricultural meetings and burgesses' ~~& burgesses~~ dinners; ~~in short~~ in sum, victualled himself with spirits more frequently than was good for ~~his~~ the clever ~~aforesaid~~ brains or his body either. He lost his situation, and after an absence ~~embezzled for a while~~ spent in trying his powers elsewhere came back to his native town, where, at the time of the foregoing events in Hintock, he gave legal advice for astonishingly small fees – mostly carrying on his profession in public-house settles, in which whose recesses he might often have been over heard making country-people's wills for half-a-crown; calling with a learned voice face for pen-&-ink & a halfpenny sheet of paper, on which he drew up the document while resting it in a little space wiped with his hand on the table amid the liquid circles formed by the cups & glasses. An idea im-

planted early in life is difficult to uproot, & many elderly tradespeople still clung to the notion that Fred Beacock knew a great deal of law.

It was he who had called Melbury by name. "You look very down, sir Mr. Melbury – very, if I may say as much," he observed, when the timber-merchant turned. "But I know – I know. A very sad case – very. I was bred to the law, as you know, & am professionally no stranger to such matters. Well, Miss Fitzpiers has her remedy."

"How – what remedy? a remedy? said Melbury.

"Under the new law, sir. A new court was established last year, & under the new statute, Twenty & twenty one Vick, Cap eighty-five, unmarrying is as easy as marrying. No more acts of Parliament necessary, no longer one law for the rich & another for the poor – but come inside – I was just going to have a nibbleykin of rum-hot – I'll explain it all to you."

The intelligence enraged Melbury, who saw little of newspapers. And though he was a severely correct man in his habits, & had no taste for entering a tavern with Fred Beacock, may, would have been quite uninfluenced by him such a character or any other matter in the world – such fascination lay in the idea of delivering his poor girl from bondage that it deprived him of ~~took away from~~ him the critical faculty. He could not resist the ex-lawyer's clerk, & entered the inn.

Here they sat down to the rum, which Melbury paid for as a matter of course, Beacock leaning back in the settle with a legal gravity which would hardly allow him to be conscious of the spirits before him, though they nevertheless disappeared with ~~preternatural~~ mysterious quickness.

How much of the acquired information on the then new divorce laws which Beaucock imparted to his listener was the result of ignorance, & how much of drapery, was never ascertained. But he related such a plausible story of the ease with which Grace could become a free woman that her father Melbury was irradiated with the project, & though he scarcely melted his lips ~~to~~ a ~~smile~~ when he came out of the inn, or when, ~~or~~ where he mounted his gig to pursue his way homeward. But home he found himself. ~~& there~~ Before he had seen Grace, he was first met accidentally by Winterborne (his brain having all the way seemed to ring sonorously as a gong in the intensity of its stir,) who found his face shining as if he had, like the Lawgiver, conversed with an angel.

He relinquished his horse & took Winterborne by the arm to a heap of "rendlewood" — as barked oak was here called — which lay under a privet-hedge. "Giles," he said, when they had sat down upon the logs, "there's a new law in the land! Grace can be free quite easily. I only knew it by the merest accident. I might not have found it out for the next ten years. She can get rid of him — d'ye hear — get rid of him! Think of that, my friend Giles!"

He related what he had learnt of the new legal remedy. A subdued tremulousness about the mouth was all the response that Winterborne made; & Melbury added "My ~~boy~~ boy — you shall have her yet — if you want her." His feelings had gathered volume as he said this, & the articulate sound of the old idea drowned his sight in mist.

"Are you sure – about this new law?" asked Winterborne, so disquieted by ~~the~~ a gigantic exultation that loomed alternately with fearful doubt that he evaded the full acceptance of Melbury's last statement.

Melbury said that he had no manner of doubt, for since his talk with Beaucock it had come into his mind that he had seen some time ago an allusion to such a legal change in the weekly papers; but having no interest in those desperate remedies at the moment he had passed it over. "But I'm not going to let the matter rest doubtful for a single day," he continued. "I am going to London. Beaucock will go with me, & we shall get the best advice as soon as we possibly can. Beaucock is a thorough lawyer – nothing the matter with him but an irony palate. I knew him as the stay & refuge of Sherton in knots of law at one time."

Winterborne's replies were of the vaguest. ~~He was so thick~~ The new possibility was almost unthinkable by him at the moment. He was Being what was called at Hintock "a solid-going fellow" at Hintock; he maintained his abeyant mood, not from want of reciprocity, but from a taciturn ~~nature~~ hesitancy, taught by life as he knew it.

"But," continued the timber-merchant, a temporary crease or two of already established anxiety supplementing those ~~of time~~ in his forehead by time and care ~~as he contracted~~; "Grace is not at all well. Nothing constitutional you know; but she has been in a low nervous state ever since that night of fright. I don't doubt but that she will be all right soon. .... I wonder how she is this evening." He rose with the words, as if he had too long forgotten her personality in the excitement of her prospective career.

They had sat till the evening was beginning to dye the garden brown, & now went towards the Melbury's house, giles a few steps in the rear of his old friend, the elder man who was stimulated earnest away by the enthusiasm of the moment & to outstep the ordinary walking of beyond words Winterborne. He felt the sky of entering Grace's presence just now, as her lover by implication reconstituted lover — which was what her father's manner would be sure to make him present — how before definite information as to her future state was forthcoming; it seemed too nearly like the act of those who rush in where angels fear to tread.

A chill to counterbalance all this the glowing promise of the day was prompt enough in coming. No sooner had he followed the timber-merchant in at the door than he heard Melbury Grammer inform him that Mrs Fitzpiers was still still more unwell than she had been in the morning. Old Doctor Jones being in the neighbourhood they had called him in, & he had instantly directed them to get her to bed. They were not however to consider her illness serious — a feverish nervous attack, the result of recent events, was what she was suffering from — & she would doubtless be well in a few days.

Winterborne therefore did not remain, & his hope of seeing her that evening was disappointed. Even this exhaustion of her morning condition did not greatly depress Melbury. He knew, he said, that his daughter's constitution was sound enough. It was only these domestic troubles that were pulling her down. Once free she would be blooming again. Melbury diagnosed rightly, as parents usually do.

He set out for London the next morning, Jones having paid another visit

& assured him that he might leave home without uneasiness, especially on an errand of that sort, which would ~~[illegible]~~ the sooner put an end to her suspense.

The timber-merchant had been away from ~~home~~ by only a day or two when it was told in Hintock ~~& in Melbury's house~~ that Doctor Fitzpiers's hat had been found in the wood, ~~& almost simultaneously~~ later on in the afternoon it was reported that the hat was brought to Melbury's; & by a piece ~~he had been seen~~ of ill-fortune, into Grace's presence. ~~There was no doubt it~~ It looked quite clean & uninjured, ~~& though~~ It had doubtless lain in the wood ever since his fall from the horse, but it looked so clean & uninjured — the summer weather & leafy shelter having much favoured its preservation — that Grace could not believe ~~but that it~~ it had remained so long concealed. A very little of fact was enough to set her fevered fancy at work at this juncture; she thought him still in the neighbourhood; she feared his sudden appearance; & her nervous malady developed consequences so grave that Doctor Jones began to look serious, & the household was alarmed.

It was the beginning of June, & the cuckoo at this time of the summer ~~year~~ scarcely ceased his cry for more than two or three hours during the night. The bird's note, so familiar to her ears from infancy, was now absolute torture to the poor girl. On the Friday following the Wednesday of Melbury's departure, & the day after the discovery of Fitzpiers's hat, the cuckoo began at two o'clock in the morning with a sudden cry from one of Melbury's appletrees, not three yards from the window of Grace's room.

"Oh — he is coming!" she cried, & in her terror sprang clean from the bed out upon the floor.

These starts & frights continued till noon; & when the doctor had arrived had seen her, & had talked with Mrs Mellony, he sat down & meditated. That ever present terror ~~must be removed~~ it was indispensable to remove from her mind at all hazards; & he thought how this might be done.

Without saying a word to anybody in the house, or to the disquieted Winterborne waiting in the lane below, Dr. Jones went home & wrote to Mr. Mellony at the London address he had obtained from his wife. The gist of his communication was that Mrs Fitzpiers should be assured as soon as possible that steps were being taken to sever the bond which was becoming a torture to her; that she would soon be free; & was even then virtually so. "If you can say it at once it may be the means of averting much harm", he said "Write to herself; not to me".

On Saturday he drove over to Hintock, & assured her with mysterious pacifications that in a day or two she might expect to receive some assuring news. Sunday morning came. So it turned out. When there was a letter for Grace from her father. It arrived at seven o'clock, the usual time at which the toddling postman passed by Hintock; at eight Grace awoke — having slept an hour or two for a wonder, & Mrs Mellony brought up the letter.

"Can you open it yourself?" said she

"Oh yes, yes!" said Grace with feeble impatience. She tore the envelope, unfolded the sheet, & read; when a creeping blush tinctured her white neck & cheek.

Her father had exercised a bold discretion. He informed her that she need have no further concern about Fitzpiers's return; that she would shortly be a free woman; and therefore if she should desire to wed her old lover — which he trusted was the case, since it was his own deep wish — she would be in a position to do so. In this Melbury had not written beyond his belief. But he very much stretched the facts in adding that the legal formalities were practically settled. The truth was that on the arrival of the doctor's letter poor Melbury had been much agitated, & could with difficulty be prevented by Beancock from returning to her bedside. What was the use of his rushing back to Hintock? Beancock had asked him. The only thing that could do her any good was a breaking of the bond. Though he had not as yet had an interview with the eminent solicitor they were about to consult he was on the point of seeing him; & the case was clear enough. Thus the simple Melbury, urged by his parental alarm at her danger, by the representations of his companion, & by the doctor's letter, had yielded, & set down to tell her roundly that she was virtually free.

"And you'd better write also to the gentleman", suggested Beancock, who fore scenting fame & fortune the germ of a large practice in the case, wished to commit Melbury to it irretrievably; to effect which he knew that nothing would be so potent as awakening the passion of Grace for Winterborne, so to effect this he that her father might not have the heart to withdraw from

his attempt to make her love legitimate when he discovered that there were difficulties in the way.

The nervous, impatient Melbury was much pleased with the idea of "starting them at once", as he called it. To put his long-delayed reparative scheme in train had become a passion with him now. He added to the letter addressed to his daughter a passage hinting that she ought to begin to encourage Winterborne, lest she should lose him altogether; and he wrote to Giles that the path was virtually open for him at last. Life was short, he declared; there were slips between the cup & the lip; her interest in him should be reawakened at once, that all might be ready when the good time came for uniting them.

Chapter XXXVIII

At these warm words Winterborne was not less ~~[illegible]~~ dazed / than he was moved in heart. The novelty of the avowal, & what it carried rendered for her
with it was in truth inapprehensible by him ~~at once~~ in its entirety.

Only a few short months ago completely estranged from this family — beholding Grace going to & fro in the distance, clothed with the alienating radiance of obvious superiority, the wife of the then popular & fashionable Fitzpiers, & hopelessly outside his ~~own~~ little social & boundary ~~line~~ down & so recent a time that flowers then folded were hardly ~~yet~~ faded, yet — he was now asked by the jealously guarding father of hers to take courage; to get himself ready for the day when he should be able to claim her.

The old times came back to him in dim procession. How he had been snubbed; how Melbury had despised his Christmas party; how that sweet coy Grace herself had looked down upon him, this household arrangements, & poor Creedle's continuances!

Well, he could not believe it. Surely no adamantine barrier of marriage with another could not be pierced like this. It did violence to custom. Yet a new law might do anything. But Was it at all within the bounds of probability that a woman who, over & above her own attainments, had been accustomed to those of a cultivated professional man, could ever be the wife of such as he?

Since the date of his rejection he had almost grown to see the reason.

oldness of that treatment. He had said to himself again & again that
(the poor ~~the~~ ceorl Giles Winterborne)
was her father was right; that ~~he~~ would never have been able to make
such a dainty girl happy. Yet now that she had stood in a position
yet further removed from his own than at first he was asked to prepare
to woo her. He was full of doubt.

Nevertheless ~~no backwardness should be shown on his part~~ it was not in him to show backwardness. To
act so promptly as Melbury desired him to act ~~would~~ seemed, indeed, scarcely ~~be right~~ wise,
because of the uncertainty of events. Giles knew nothing of legal procedure,
but he did know that, for him to step up to Grace as a lover before the bond which
bound her was actually dissolved was simply ~~a broadcast~~ an extravagant dream of her
father's overstrained mind. He pitied Melbury for his almost childish
enthusiasm, & saw that the ~~old~~ ageing man must have suffered acutely to be
weakened to this unreasoning desire.

Winterborne was far too magnanimous & heart~~e~~n cynical any conjecture that
~~had~~ the timber-merchant, in his intense affection for Grace, was counting
him now he came back young & unmarried as the least in an anomalous
position to escape which a dead husband ~~would be~~ is better than none. He felt
quite sure that his old friend was simply on tenterhooks of anxiety to
repair the almost irreparable error of dividing two whom nature had striven
to join together in earlier days, & that he was oblivious of formalities. His
~~overworked~~ ~~brain~~ ~~time~~. His
cautious supervision of his past years had at last ~~at best~~ overslept itself, & Winterborne perceived that,
in this new beginning, ~~he~~ necessary care not to compromise Grace by too early

advances must ~~come from~~ be exercised by himself. (There is no such thing as a stationary love: men are either loving more or loving less.)

Perhaps Winterborne was not quite so ~~warm~~ ardent as heretofore. But though he himself recognized no ~~change in her feelings~~ decline in his sense of her dearness. Giles did indeed lower now than when he had fetched her from Sherton at her last return from school the marvel was small. He had been laboring ever since his rejection of her marriage to reduce his former passion to a docile friendship, not of pure regard to its expediency; & their separation may have helped him to a partial success.

A week & more passed, & there was no further news of Melbury. But the effect of the intelligence he had already transmitted upon the elastic-nerved daughter of the woods had been much what the old surgeon Jones had surmised. It had soothed her perturbed spirit better than all the opiates in the pharmacopoeia. She had slept unbrokenly a whole night & a day, & the "new law" was to her a mysterious, beneficent, ~~being~~ godlike entity, lately descended upon earth, that would make her as she once had been without trouble or annoyance. Her position ~~disturbed~~ prettified her, its abstract features rousing an aversion ~~more~~ greater than her aversion to the personality of him who had caused it (even) ~~him who had been her husband~~. It was ~~slight~~ mortifying, productive of slights, undignified. Him she could forget; her circumstances she had always with her.

She saw nothing of Winterborne during the days of her recovery ~~till she had nearly recovered health~~; & perhaps on that account her fancy wove about him a more romantic tissue than it could have done if he had been ~~before~~ her slow with all the ~~defects~~ specks & flaws inseparable from corporeity. He rose upon her ~~fancy~~ memory as the fruit-god &

·X· From being a frail phantom of her former equable self she returned in bounds to a condition of passable philosophy. She bloomed again in the face in the course of a few days,

leafy, & smeared with green lichen,
the wood-god in alternation; sometimes as she had seen him amongst the
sappy budding boughs of the plantations; sometimes as she had met him on
cider-stained & with apple-pips in the hair of his arms,
his return from cidermaking in White-Hart Vale, with his vats & presses
beside him. In her secret heart she ~~was enthusiastic to show~~ Giles how
(for all how she still regarded him) almost approximated to her father's en-
thusiasm in wishing to show Giles once. The question whether the future
would indeed bring them together was a standing wonder with
her. She knew that it could not with any propriety do so just yet. But
reverently,
believing in her father's sound judgment & knowledge, as good girls are wont
to do, she remembered what he had written about her giving a hint
to Winterborne lest there should be risk in delay, & her feelings were
not averse to such a step, so far as it could be done without danger at this
the
early stage of proceedings.

X. She and Mrs Melbury were well enough to go about as usual. One day Mrs Mel-
bury proposed that for a change she should be driven in the gig to
Sherton market, whither the Melbury man was going on other er-
rands. Grace had no business whatever in Sherton; but it crossed her
mind that Winterborne would probably be there, & this made the thought
of such a drive interesting.

On the way she saw nothing of him; but when the horse was walk-
ing slowly through the obstructions of Sheep Street she discerned him going
near on the pavement. She thought of that time when he had been standing

under his appletree on her return from school, & of the tender opportunity then missed though her heart rose in her throat. She had asked overmuch now. She now did she forget the last occasion on which she had beheld him in that town, making cider in the courtyard of the Earl of Wessex hotel, while she was figuring as a fine lady in the balcony above.

Grace directed the man to set her down there in the midst; & immediately went up to her lover. Giles had not before observed her, & his eyes now suppressedly lighted his pleasure, without the embarrassment that had formerly marked him at such meetings.

When a few words had been spoken she said archly "I have nothing to do. Perhaps you are deeply engaged?"

"I? not a bit. My business now at the best of times is small, I am sorry to say," he replied.

"Well, then — I am going into the Abbey. Come along with me."

The proposition had suggested itself as a quick escape from publicity, for many eyes were regarding her. She had hoped that sufficient time had elapsed for the extinction of curiosity; but it was quite otherwise. The people looked at her with tender interest as the deserted girl-wife — without obtrusiveness, & without malignity; but she was ill-prepared for scrutiny in any shape.

They walked about the Abbey aisles, & presently sat down. Not a soul was in the building save themselves. She regarded a stained window with her head sideways, & tentatively asked him if he remembered the last time they were in that town alone.

He remembered it perfectly, & remarked, "You were a proud miss then.

& as dainty as you were high. Perhaps you are now."

Grace slowly shook her head. "Affliction has taken all that out of me," she answered impressively. "Perhaps I am too far the other way now." As there was something lurking in this that she could not explain she added sequickly as not to allow him time to think of it, "Has my father written to you at all?"

"Yes," said Winterborne.

She glanced ponderingly up at him. "Not about me?"

"Yes." [His mouth ~~face~~ was lined with mysterious character which told her that he had been bidden to take the hint as to the future which she had been bidden to give. The unexpected discovery sent a scarlet pulsation through ~~her~~ Grace for the moment. However it was only Giles who stood there, of whom she had no fear; & her self-possession returned.

"He said I was to sound you with a view to what you will understand, if you care to," continued Winterborne in a low voice ~~which to a stranger might have seemed like indifference~~. Having been put on his track by herself he was not disposed to abandon it in a hurry.

They had been children together, & there was between them that familiarity as to personal affairs which only such acquaintanceship can give.

"You know, Giles," she answered, speaking in a very practical tone, "that that is all very well; but I am in a very anomalous position at present, and I cannot say anything to the point about such things as those."

"No?" he said, with a stray air ~~of injured ego~~ as regarded the subject. He was looking at her with a curious consciousness of discovery. He had not been imagining that their ~~expected his intelligence~~

renewed intercourse
to/would show her ~~self~~ to him thus. For the first time he realized an unexpectedness in her, which after all should not have been unexpected. She before him was not the girl Grace Melbury whom he had used to know. Of course he might easily have known/presumed as much; but it had never occurred to him. She was a woman who had been married; she had moved on; /& without having lost her girlish modesty she had lost her girlish shyness. The inevitable change, though known to him, had not been heeded; & it struck him into a momentary fixity. The truth was that he had never come into close comradeship with her since her engagement to Fitzpiers, with the brief exception of the evening encounter on ~~Rack down~~ Rubdown Hill, when she met him with his cider apparatus; & that interview had been of too cursory a kind for insight.

Winterborne had advanced, too. He could criticise her. Times had been when to criticise a single trait in Grace Melbury would have lain as far beyond his powers as to criticise a deity. This thing was sure: it was a new woman in many ways whom he had come out to see; a creature of more ideas, more dignity & above all, more assurance, than the original Grace had been capable of. He could not at first decide whether he ~~was~~ were pleased or displeased at this. But upon the whole he vaguely attracted him.

She was so sweet & sensitive that she feared his silence betokened ~~some thought~~ something left in his ~~head~~ brain of the nature of an enemy to her. "What are you thinking of that makes those lines come in your forehead?" she asked. "I did not mean to offend you by speaking of the time being premature as yet."

Winterborne Touched by the genuine loving kindness which had lain at the foundation of these words, & much moved, Winterborne turned his face aside as he took her by the hand. He was grieved that he had criticised her. "You are very good, dear Grace," he said in a low voice. "You are better, much better, than you used to be."

"How?"

He could not very well tell her how, & said with an evasive smile, "You are prettier," which was not what he really had meant. He then remained still holding her right hand in his own right, so that they faced in opposite ways; & as he did not let go she ventured upon a tender remonstrance.

"I think we have gone as far as we ought to go at present — and far enough to satisfy my poor father that we are the same as ever. You see Giles, my case is not settled yet, and if ..... Oh, suppose I never get free! ..... there should be any hitch or informality —"

She drew a catching breath & turned pale. The dialogue had been affectionate comedy up to this point. The gloomy atmosphere of the past, & the still gloomy horizon of the present, had been for the interval forgotten. Now the whole environment came back, the due balance of shade among the lights was restored.

"It is sure to be all right, I trust?" she resumed in uneasy accents. "What did my father say the solicitor had told him?"

"Oh — that all is sure enough. The case is so clear — nothing could be clearer. But the legal part is not yet quite done & finished, as is natural."

"Oh no – of course not," she said sunk in meek thought. "But father said it was almost – did he not? Do you know anything about the new law that makes these things so easy?"

"Nothing – except the general fact that it ~~has~~ enables ill-assorted husbands & wives to part in a way they could not formerly do without an act of parliament.

"Have you to sign a paper, or swear anything? Is it something like that?"

"Yes I believe so."

"How long has it been introduced?"

"About six months or a year the lawyer said, I think."

To hear these two poor ~~innocents~~ arcadians talk of law ~~as if they~~ (imperial) ~~were then Arcadians~~ humane ~~tender hearted~~ persons who should have known what a dangerous structure they were building up on their supposed knowledge. They remained in thought, like children, in the presence of the incomprehensible.

"Giles", she said at last, "it makes me quite weary when I think how serious my situation is, or has been. – Shall we not go out from here now, as it may seem rather fast of me – our being so long together – I mean – if anybody were to see us?... I am almost sure", she added uncertainly, "that I ought not to let you ~~you ought to withhold~~ hold my hand yet, knowing that the documents – or whatever it may be – have not been signed; so that I – am still, as married as ever – or almost.

My dear father has forgotten himself. I don't not that I feel morally bound to any one else, after what has taken place; now, too, that several months have passed. But I wish to keep the proprieties as well as I can."

"Yes; yes. Still, ~~only~~ your father reminds us that life is short. I merely feel that it is;

is why I wished to understand you in,
* that ~~I wish to hasten on~~ this that we have begun. At ~~Some~~ times, dear Grace, since receiving your father's letter, I am as uneasy & fearful as a child at what he said. If one of us were to die before the formal signing & sealing that is to release you ~~have~~ been done, it, we should ~~little~~ drop all out of the world & never have made the most of this little, short, but real opportunity, I should think to myself as I sank down dying. 'Would to my God that I had spoken out my whole heart— given her one poor little kiss when I had the chance to give it! But I never did, although she had promised to be mine someday; & now I never can.' That's what I should think."

She had begun by watching the words from his lips with a mournful regard, as though their passage were visible; but as he went on she ~~looked down~~ dropped her glance.

"Yes", she said. "I have thought that too. And because I have thought it I by no means meant, in speaking of the proprieties, to be reserved & cold to you who loved me so long ago, or to hurt your heart as I used to do at that thoughtless time. O just at all, indeed! But— ought I to allow you— O it is too quick— surely!" Her eyes filled with tears of bewildered, alarmed emotion.

Winterborne was too straightforward to influence her further against her ~~mainfestly~~ better judgment. "Yes— I suppose it is," he said repentantly. "I'll wait till all is settled. What did your father say in that ~~two~~ last letter?"

He meant about his progress with the petition, but she, mistaking him, frankly spoke of the personal part. "He said— what I have implied. Should I tell more plainly?"

"One— don't, if it is a secret."

"Not at all. I will tell every word straight out; Giles, if you wish. He said I was to encourage you there. But I cannot obey him further to-day. Come, let us go now." She gently slid her hand from his, & went in front of him out of the abbey.

"I was thinking of getting some dinner," said Winterborne as they walked. "And you too must require something. Do let me take you to a place I know."

Grace was almost without a friend in the world outside her father's house; her life with Fitzpiers had brought her no society; it had sometimes indeed brought her deeper solitude & inconsideration than any she had ever known before. Hence it was a treat to her to find herself again the object of thoughtful care. But she questioned if to go publicly to dine with Giles Winterborne were not an unwise proposal due rather to his unsophistication than to his discretion. She said gently that she would much prefer his ordering her lunch at some place, & then coming to tell her it was ready while she remained in the abbey porch. Giles saw her secret reasoning, thought how hopelessly blind to propriety he was beside her, & went to do as she wished.

He was not absent more than ten minutes, & found Grace where he had left her. "It will be quite ready by the time you get there," he said, & told her the name of the inn at which the meal had been ordered, which was one that she had never heard of.

"I'll find it by inquiring," said Grace, setting out.

"And shall I see you again?"

"Oh yes – come to me there. It will not be like going together. I shall want you to find my father's man & the gig for me."

He waited on some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, till he thought her lunch ended, & that she might fairly take advantage of her invitation to start her on her way home. He went straight to The Three Tuns – a little tavern in a side street, ~~reached by~~ scrupulously clean, but humble & inexpensive. On his way he had an occasional misgiving as to whether he place had been ~~was~~ elegant enough for her; & as soon as he entered it, & saw her ensconced there, he perceived that he had blundered.

Grace was seated in the only dining-room that the simple old hostelry could boast of, which was also a ~~dining-room~~ general parlour on market-days – a long low apartment with a wide ~~light~~ red-curtained window to the street, & another to the garden. Grace had retreated to the end of the room looking out upon the latter, the front part being full of a mixed company which had dropped in since he was there. She was in a mood of the greatest depression. On arriving & seeing what the tavern was like she had been tempted to enquire; but having gone too far to retreat she had heroically entered & sat down on the well-scrubbed settle, opposite the narrow table with its knives & steel forks, ~~&~~ tin pepperboxes, ~~and~~ blue salt-cellars, & ~~triangular wooden~~ posters advertising the sale of bullocks against the wall. ~~& spittoons in a row underneath~~. The last time that she had taken any meal in a public place it had been with Filsiers at the grand new Earl of Wessex hotel in that town, after a two months' roaming ~~through~~ and sojourning at the gigantic hotels of the Continent. How could she have expected any other kind of accommodation in present circumstances, & yet how unprepared she was for this change! The tastes that she had

acquired from Fitzpiers had been imbibed so subtly that she hardly knew she possessed them till corporated by this contrast. The elegant Fitzpiers, in fact, at that very moment owed a long bill at the above-mentioned hotel for the luxurious style in which he used to put her up there whenever they drove to Sherton. But such is social sentiment that she had been quite comfortable under those debt-impending conditions, whilst she felt humiliated by her present situation, which Winterborne had paid for honestly on the nail.

He had noticed in a moment that she shrank from her position, & all his pleasure was gone. It was the same susceptibility over again which had spoiled his Christmas party long ago. [But she did not know that this recrudescence was the only the casual result of Grace's apprenticeship to what she was determined to learn in spite of it — a consequence of those sudden surprises which confront everyone bent upon turning over a new leaf. She had finished her lunch, which he saw had been a very mincing performance; & he brought her out of the house as soon as he could.

"Now," he said, with great deep eyes, sadly, "you have not finished at all well, I know. Come round to the Earl of Wessex. I'll order a tea there. I did not remember that what was good enough for me was not good enough for you."

Her face faded into an aspect of deep distress when she saw what had happened. "Oh no Giles," she said with extreme pathos: sadness; "certainly not. Why do you say that, when you know better? You ever will misunderstand me"

"Indeed that's not so, Mrs Fitzpiers. Can you deny that you felt out of place at the three Tuns?"

"I don't know! Well, since you make me speak, I do not deny it."

"And yet I have felt at home there these twenty years. Your husband used always to take you to the Earl of Wessex, did he not?"

"Yes," she reluctantly admitted. How could she explain in the street of a market-town that it was her superficial & transitory taste which had been offended, & not her nature? or her affection. Fortunately, or unfortunately, at that moment they saw Melbury's man driving vacantly along the street in search of her, he whom having passed at which he had been told to take her up. Winterborne hailed him, & she was powerless then to prolong the discourse. She entered mechanically, & the horse trotted away.

Chapter XXXIX

All night did Winterborne think over that unsatisfactory ending of a pleasant time, forgetting the pleasant time itself. He feared anew that they could never be happy together, even should she be free to choose him. She was accomplished; he was unrefined. It was the original difficulty, which he was too sensitive to recklessly ignore, as some men would have done in his place.

He was one of those silent unobtrusive beings who want little from others in the way of favour or condescension, & perhaps on that very account scrutinize those others' behaviour too closely. He was not versatile, but one in whom a hope or belief which had once had its rise, meridian, & decline, seldom

again exactly recurred, as in the breasts of more sanguine mortals. He had once worshipped her, laid out his life to suit her, wooed her, & lost her. Though it was with almost the same zest that he had begun to tread the old tracks again; and allowed himself to be so charmed with her that day.

More another step towards her he would not. He would even repulse her — as a tribute to conscience for her own sake. It would be sheer sin to let her prepare a pitfall for her happiness not much smaller than he first by inveigling her into a union with such as he. Her poor father was now blind to these subtleties, which he had formerly beheld as in noonday light. It was his own duty to declare them — for her dear sake.

Winterborne little thought as he ruminated thus what the morning was about to bring forth. For thwarting his theses into confusion. With the slant of the sun through the shade the Hintock lees there came a letter for him — bearing the London postmark, & subscribed by — of all persons — Beamcock.

Giles had once done that mistletoe man a good turn, & now was the moment when Beamcock had chosen to remember it, in his own way. He had during his absence with Melbury he had plainly heard a good deal of the old timber-merchant's scheme; & his communication was to convey to Winterborne at the earliest possible moment intelligence that their mission had failed. Fitzpiers's conduct had not been sufficiently cruel to Grace to enable her to break the tie which bound her to him. She was doomed to be his wife to the end of the chapter.

Winterborne quite forgot his superficial differences with Grace under the

~~warm rush of deep~~ distracting ~~emotion~~ pity ~~which the information brought~~ ~~in her~~ brain.
White Lion.

Grace too had had a very uncomfortable night, & her solicitous embarrassment was not lessened the next morning when ~~a letter was also put into~~ ~~her hands — one~~ another letter was put into her hands. It was from her father, & at least its tenour was ~~the same~~ much the same as an ~~different~~ one ~~that had preceded it~~ from Winterborne by the same post. ~~It had been written the~~ ~~late on the evening before Bocock's~~ when Melbury knew ~~nothing of the~~ ~~intelligence awaiting him the next day~~. After stating how ~~that he was~~ extremely glad he was to hear that she was better, & able to get out of doors, he went on:

"This is a wearisome business, the solicitor we have come to see being out of town. I do not know when I shall get home. My great anxiety in this delay is still lest you should lose Giles Winterborne. I cannot rest at night for thinking that while our business is hanging fire, he may become estranged, or go away from the neighbourhood. I have set my heart upon seeing him your husband, if you ever have another. Do then Grace give him some temporary encouragement, even though it is over early. For when I consider the past I do think God will forgive me & you for being a little forward. I have another reason for this my dear. I feel myself going rapidly down hill, & late affairs have still further helped me that way. And until this thing is done I cannot rest in peace."

He added a postscript: "I have just heard that the solicitor is to be seen to-morrow. Possibly therefore I shall return in the evening after you get this."

The ~~poor~~ paternal ~~expectant~~ longing ran on all fours with her own desire; & yet in forwarding it yesterday she had been on the brink of giving offence. While ~~longing~~ craving to be a country girl again just as her father requested; to put off the old Eve, the fastidious Miss, or rather Madam, completely, her first attempt had been beaten by the unexpected vitality of that fastidiousness. Her father on returning & seeing the ~~little~~ trifling coolness of Giles would be sure to say that the same perversity which had led her to make difficulties about marrying ~~Edgar~~ Tilyfiers was now prompting her to ~~play fast & loose~~ blow hot and cold with ~~Giles~~ poor Winterborne.

If the latter had been the most subtle hand at touching the stops of her delicate ~~pathos~~ soul instead of one just bound who had himself to let her drift away from him again (if she ~~would~~ on the wind of her estranging education, ~~for ever~~, he could not have acted more seductively ~~temptingly~~ than he did that day. He chanced to be engaged upon some temporary work in a field opposite her windows. She could not discover what he was doing, but she could see him coming & going in this an air of determined abandonment of ~~all~~ the whole landscape that lay in her direction. ~~He must~~ ~~Her reading was keen & true: to renounce her he had no alternative as an honest man, after the the cold & the cruel sickening news from Boscastle, & he had set about it stoically.~~

O how she longed to make it up with him! Her father coming in the evening — which meant, she supposed, that all formalities would be in train, her marriage virtually annulled, & she be free to be won again — how could she look him in the face if he should see them estranged thus?

It was a fair green evening in June: ~~that followed the day of~~

She was seated in the garden, in the rustic chair which stood under the laurel-bushes; made of peeled oak branches that came to Mellings premises as repose after barking-time. The mass of full-juiced leafage on the heights around her was just swayed into faint gestures by a nearly spent wind which, even in this enfeebled state, did not reach her shelter. All day she had expected Giles to call — to inquire how she had got home, or something or other; but he had not come. And he still tantalized her by going athwart the acres that fronted orchard opposite. She could see him as she sat.

A slight diversion was presently created by Creedle bringing up him a letter. She knew from this that Creedle had just come from Sherton, & had called as usual at the post-office for anything that whatever had arrived by the afternoon post, of which there was no delivery at Hintock. She pondered on what the letter might contain — particularly whether it were a second reminder for Winterborne from her father, like her own of the morning.

But it appeared to have no bearing upon Fancy whatever. Giles read its contents; & almost immediately turned away to a gap in the hedge of the orchard — if that could be called a hedge which, owing to the droppings of the trees, was little more than a bank with a bush upon it here & there. He had entered the plantation, & was no doubt going that way homeward by the mysterious hut that he occupied on the other side of the woodland.

The sad sands were running swiftly through the glass; she had often

felt it in these latter days; & like Giles, she felt it doubly now after the solemn & pathetic reminder ~~of the same fact~~ in her father's communication. Her freshness would pass, the long-suffering devotion of Giles might suddenly end — might end that very hour. ~~He thought~~ Men were so strange. The thought took away from her all her former reticence, & made her action bold. If the little breach, quarrel, or whatever it might be called, of yesterday, was to be healed ~~made~~ up it must be done by her on the instant. She started from her seat. She crossed into the orchard, & clambered through the gap after Giles, just as he was disappearing in a faun-like figure under the green canopy ~~shadows~~ over the brown floor.

~~How~~ Grace had been wrong — very far wrong — in assuming that the letter had no reference to herself because Giles had turned away with the wood after its perusal. It was, sad to say, because the missive had so much reference to herself that he had them turned away. He feared that his grieved disappointment might be observed. The letter was from Beaucock, written a few hours later than Melbury's to his daughter. It announced failure.

Giles had once done that shiftless man a good turn, & now was the moment when Beaucock had chosen to remember it, in his own way. During his absence in town with Melbury the lawyer's clerk had naturally heard a great deal of the timber-merchant's scheme; & of justice to Giles his family communication was to inform Winterborne at the earliest possible moment that their attempt ~~success~~ had failed, ~~that~~ in order that the young man should not place himself in a false position towards Grace in the belief of its coming success. The news was, in ~~short~~ sum, that Fitzpiers's conduct had not been sufficiently cruel to Grace to enable her to sue a

much meaning to them both. By this time she was seated in the garden, in the rustic chair which stood under the laurel-bushes, made of the peeled oak branches that came to Mabbey's premises in the way of business. The mass of full-juiced foliage on the heights around her

the bond. She was apparently doomed to be his wife till the end of the chapter.

Winterborne quite forgot his superficial differences with the poor girl under the warm rush of deep distracting love for her, while the almost tragical information engendered.

To renounce her for ever – that was then the end of it for him, after all. There was no longer any question about suitability, or room for tiffs on petty tastes. The curtain had fallen again between them. She could not be his. The cruelty of their late revived hope was now manifest. How could they all have been so simple as to suppose this thing could be done?

It was at this moment that, hearing some one coming behind him, he turned between the thickets. and saw her hastening on. He perceived in an instant that she did not know the blighting news.

"Giles – why didn't you come across to me?" she asked with arch reproach. "Didn't you see me sitting there ever so long?"

"Oh yes," he said in unprepared provisional tones, for her unexpected presence caught him without the slightest plan of behaviour in the coming time. His manner made her think that she had been too chiding in her speech; and a mild scarlet wave passed over her as she resolved to soften it.

"I have had another letter from my father," she hastened to continue. "He thinks he may come home this evening. And – in view of his hopes – it will grieve him if there is any little difference between us, Giles."

"There is none," he said, sadly regarding her from the face downwards as he pondered how to lay the cruel truth bare.

"Still – I fear you have not quite forgiven me about my being uncomfortable at the inn."

"I have grace, I'm sure".

"But you speak in quite an unhappy way", she returned, coming quite close to him with the most winning of the pretty airs that ~~the world~~ appertained to her. "Don't you think you will ever be happy, Giles?"

He did not reply for some instants.

"When the sun shines on the north front of Sherton Abbey — that's when my happiness will come to me!" said he, staring as it were into the earth.

"But — then that means that there is something more than my offending you in not liking "The Three Tuns"..... If it is because I — did not like to let you kiss me in the Abbey — well, you know, Giles, that it was not on account of my cold feelings, but because I did certainly, just then, think it was rather premature, in spite of my poor father. That was the true reason — the sole one. But I do not want to be hard — God knows I do not," she said her voice fluctuating. "— as I am on the verge of freedom — And perhaps I am not right, after all, in thinking there is any harm in your kissing me."

"O God!" said Winterborne.

His head was turned askance, as he still resolutely regarded the ground. "O God" he whispered himself. For the last several minutes he had seen this great temptation approaching in regular siege, & now it had come. The wrong, attitude of the sin that would be committed in taking advantage of her lips' offer, had a modified guilt, the social sin of now ruled by purer thoughts of old days in the eyes of one whose life had been so primitive, & so ~~different as hers can hardly be esteemed~~ as Giles's, which can hardly be explained.

"Did you say anything?" she asked timidly.

"You mean that it must be settled, since my father is coming home?" she said gladly.

"O no — only that"..... Winterborne, though fighting many valiantly against

himself all this while, though he would have protected Grace's good repute as the apple of his eye, was only a man; and in face of the agonizing seductiveness shown by her, in her unenlightened semi-girl simplicity about the laws & ordinances, he betrayed a man's weakness. Since it was so — since it had come to this, that Grace, deeming herself free to do it, was virtually asking him to demonstrate that he loved her — since he could demonstrate it only too truly — since life was short & love was strong — he gave way to the temptation, notwithstanding that he perfectly well knew how the wedded unexcelled & faithless. Indeed he cared for nothing past or future, simply accepting the present & what it brought, desiring once in his life to clasp in his arms her he had watched over & loved so long, & so from his embrace, influenced ~~by a sort of superstition~~.

She started back suddenly by a sort of inspiration. O — I suppose," she stammered, "that I am really free? — that this is right? Is there really a new Law." ~~But as~~ Father cannot have been too sanguine in saying —"

He did not answer, & in a moment afterward ~~the tribute was taken~~ Grace burst into tears in spite of herself. "Oh, why does not my father come home & explain"; she sobbed, "and let me know clearly what I am! It is too trying, this, to ask me to — and then to leave me so long in so vague a state that I do not know what to do, & perhaps do wrong!"

Winterborne felt like a very Cain, over & above his previous sorrow. How ~~a Cain to the brothers~~. He had sinned against her in not telling her what he knew. He turned aside; the feeling of his cruelty ~~to her~~ mounted higher & higher. How could he have dreamt

~~was it not an insult?~~ of ~~doing this~~ kissing her? He could hardly refrain from tears. Surely nothing more pitiable had ever been known than the condition of this poor young thing, now as heretofore the victim of her father's well-meant but blundering policy

Even in the hour of Melbury's greatest assurance Winterborne had harboured a suspicion that no law, new or old, could undo Grace's marriage without her appearance in public; though he was not sufficiently sure of what might have been enacted to destroy by his own words her pleasing idea that a mere dash of the pen, or her father's testimony, was going to be sufficient. But all he had never suspected the sad fact that the position was irremediable.

Poor Grace, perhaps feeling that she had indulged in too much fluster for a mere kiss, calmed herself at finding how grave he was. "I am glad we are friends again, anyhow," she said smiling amid her tears. "Giles, if you had only shown half the boldness before I was married that you show now you would have carried me off for your own first-instead of second. If we do marry I hope you will never think badly of me for encouraging you a little, but my father is so impatient, you know, as his years & infirmities increase, that he will wish to see us a little advanced when he comes. That is my only excuse."

To Winterborne all this was ~~even~~ sadder than it was sweet. How could she so trust her father's conjectures! He did not know how

to tell her the truth, & shame himself. And yet he felt that it must be done.

"We may have been wrong," he began almost ~~gently~~ fearfully, "in supposing that it can all be carried out whilst we stay here at Hinton. I am not sure but that people may have to appear in a court ~~public~~ even under the new act; & if there should be any difficulty & we cannot marry after all—"

Her cheeks ~~were~~ became slowly bloodless ~~in a moment~~. "O Giles," she said grasping his arm, you have heard something! What — cannot my father conclude it there & now? Surely he has done it? O Giles, Giles, don't deceive me. What terrible position am I in?"

He could not tell her, try as he would. The sense of her implicit trust in his honour absolutely disabled him. "I cannot inform you," he murmured his voice as husky as that of the leaves under foot. "Your father will soon be here. Then we shall know. I will take you home."

Inexpressibly dear as she was to him he offered her his arm with the most reserved formal air, as he added correctingly, "I will take you at any rate into the drive."

Thus they walked on together, Grace vibrating between happiness & misgiving. It was only a few minutes walk to where the drive ran, & they had hardly descended into it when they heard a voice behind them cry, "Take out that arm!" [For a moment they did not heed, and the voice ~~from which they knew well~~ repeated more loudly & hoarsely,

"Take out that arm!" It was Melbury's. He ~~had~~ had returned sooner than they expected & now came up to them. Grace's hand had been

on her hearing the second command.
withdrawn like lightning. "I don't blame you, I don't blame you," he said, in the weary cadence of one broken down with scourgings, "but you two must walk together no more..... I have been surprised — I have been cruelly deceived..... Giles, don't say anything to me; but go away!"

He was evidently not aware that Winterborne had known the truth before he brought it; & Giles would not stay to discuss it with him then. When he gone man had gone
Melbury took his daughter indoors to the room he used as his office. There he sat down, bent over the slope of the bureau, her bewildered gaze fixed upon him.

When Melbury had recovered a little he said, "You are now as ever Fitzpiers's wife. I was deluded. He has not done you enough harm. You are still subject to his beck & call."

"Then let it be, & never mind, Father," she said with dignified sorrow. "I can bear it. It is your trouble that grieves me most." She stooped over him, & put her arm round his neck, which distressed Melbury still more. "I don't mind at all what comes to me," Grace continued; "whose wife I am, or whose I am not. I do love Giles; I cannot help that; & I have gone farther with him than I should have done if I had known exactly how things were. But I do not reproach you."

"Then Giles did not tell you?" said Melbury.

"No, said she. "He could not have known it."

Her father suspected the accuracy of this, for he knew that Remcock

had written. But he said nothing, & Grace went away to the solitude of her chamber.

Her heavy disquietude had many shapes; & for a time she put aside the dominant fact to think of her too free conduct towards Giles. His love-making had been brief enough it was sweet; but would he on reflection contemn ~~blame~~ her for forwardness? How could she have been so simple as to suppose she was in a position to behave as she had done! Thus she mentally blamed her ignorance; & yet in the centre of her heart she blessed it a little for what it had momentarily brought her.

Chapter XLe

~~Intramural~~ Life among the people involved in these events seemed to be suppressed & hide-bound for a while. Grace seldom showed herself outside the house, never outside the garden: for she feared she might encounter Giles Winterborne; & that she could not bear.

This pensive intramural existence ~~within the walls~~ of the self-constituted nunnery appeared likely to continue for an indefinite time. She had learnt that there was one possibility in which ~~of deliverance~~ her formerly imagined position might become a reality, & only one; ~~namely~~ that her husband's absence should continue long enough to amount to positive desertion. But she never allowed her mind to dwell much upon the thought; still less did she deliberately hope for such a result. Her regard for Winterborne had been rarefied ~~etherealized~~ by the shock which followed its avowal into an ethereal emotion ~~which~~ that had little to do with living & doing.

⁂ [As for Giles he was lying – or rather sitting – ill at his hut, ~~though not a soul knew it~~. A feverish indisposition which had been hanging about him for some time, the result of a chill caught the previous winter, seemed to acquire ~~strength~~ virulence with the prostration of his hopes. But not a soul knew of his languor, & he did not think the case serious enough to send for a medical man. After a few days he was better again, & crept about his home in a great-coat, attending to his simple wants as usual with his own hands.

So matters stood when the limpid insertion of Grace's ~~quality of tone~~ pool-like existence was disturbed as by a geyser. She received a letter from Fitzpiers.

Such a terrible letter it was, though couched in the gentlest language in its import. Grace had grown to regard him with toleration in his absence, & her relation to him with equanimity; till she had almost forgotten how trying his presence would be. He wrote briefly & unaffectedly; he made no excuses, but informed her that he was living quite alone, & had been led to think that they ought to be together, if she would make up her mind to forgive him. He therefore purported to cross the Channel to Budmouth by the steamer on a day he named, which she found to be three days after the time of her present reading.

He said he could not come to Hintock for various reasons, which her father would understand even better than herself. As the only alternative she was to be on the quay to meet the steamer when it arrived from the opposite coast, which would probably be about half an hour before midnight, bringing with her any luggage she might require; join him there, & press with him into the twin-vessel, which left immediately the other entered the harbour; returning thus with him to his Continental dwelling-place, which he did not name. He had no intention of showing himself on land at all.

She trembled & took the letter to her father, who now continued for long hours by the fireless summer chimney-corner, as if he thought it were winter, the pitcher of cider standing beside him, mostly untasted, & coated with a film of dust. After reading it he looked up.

"You shan't go," said he.

"I had felt I would not," she answered. "But I did not know what you would say."

"If he comes & lives in England, not too near here, & in a respectable way, & wants you to come to him, I am not sure that I'll oppose him in wishing it," muttered Melbury. "I'd strive myself to keep you both. But go abroad you never shall, in a genteel & seemly style. with my consent."

There the question rested that day. Grace was unable to reply to her husband in the absence of an address, & the morrow came, & the next day, & the evening on which he had requested her to meet him. Throughout the whole of it she remained within the four walls of her room.

The sense of her harassment, & dark doubt of what might be impending, hung like a cowl of blackness over the Melbury household. They spoke almost in whispers, & wondered what Fitzpiers would do next. It was the hope of everyone that, finding she did not arrive, he would return again to France; & as for Grace, she was willing to write to him on the most kindly terms if he would only keep away.

The night passed, Grace lying wide awake, & her relatives in great part likewise. When they met the next morning (though neither speaking of the subject which occupied all their thoughts) they were pale & anxious. The day passed as quietly as the previous ones; & she began to think that in the rank caprice of his moods he had abandoned the idea of getting her to join him as quickly as it was formed.

All at once on a sudden some person who had just come from Sherton entered the house with the news that Mr Fitzpiers was on his way home to Hintock. He had been seen hiring a carriage at the Earl of Wessex hotel.

Her father & Grace were both present when the intelligence was announced. "Now," said Melbury, "we must make the best of what has been a very bad matter. The man is repenting: his partner of his shame, I hear, is gone away from him to Switzerland; so that chapter of his life is probably over. If he chooses to make a home for ye I think you should not say him nay, Grace. Certainly, He cannot very well live at Hintock without a blow to his pride; but if he can bear that, & likes Hintock best — why, there's the empty room of the house as it was before."

"O father!" said Grace, turning white with dismay.

"Why not?" said he, a little of his former doggedness returning. He was, in truth, disposed to somewhat more unreasonably to greater leniency towards her husband just now than he had shown formerly, partly from a conviction that he had treated him over roughly in his anger. Surely it is the most respectable thing to do?" he continued, "I don't like this state that you are in — neither married nor single. It hurts me & it hurts you, & it will always be remembered against us in Hintock. There has never been any scandal like it in the family before."

"He will be here in less than an hour," murmured Grace. The twilight of the room prevented her father seeing the despondent misery of her face. The one intolerable condition, the condition she had deprecated above all others, was that of Fitzpiers's reinstatement there. "O I won't, I won't see him," she said sinking down. She was almost hysterical.

"Try if you cannot," he returned moodily.

"O yes, I will, I will," she went on inconsequently. "I'll try:" & jumping up suddenly she left the room.

In the darkness of the apartment to which she flew nothing could have been seen during the next half hour; but from a corner a quick breathing was audible from this impressible creature, who combined modern nerves with primitive emotions, & was doomed by such co-existence to be numbered among the distressed, & to take her scourgings to their exquisite extremity.

The window was open. On this quiet late-summer evening whatever sound arose in so secluded a district — the chirp of a bird, a call from a voice, the turning of a wheel — extended over bush & tree to unwonted distances. Very few sounds did arise. But as Grace invisibly breathed in the brown glooms of the chamber the small remote noise of light wheels came in to her, accompanied by the trot of a horse on the turnpike-road. There seemed to be a sudden hitch or pause in the progress of the vehicle, which was what first drew her attention to it. She knew the point whence the sound proceeded — the hill-top over which travellers passed on their way hitherward from Sherton Abbas — the place at which she had emerged from the wood with Mrs Charmond. Grace slid along the floor, & bent her head over the window-sill, listening with open lips. The carriage had stopped, & she heard a man use exclamatory words. Then another said, "What the devil is the matter with the horse?" She recognised the voice as her husband's.

The accident, such as it had been, was soon remedied, & the

⁂ She opened some little ivory tablets that lay on the dressing-table, scribbled in pencil on one of them "I am gone to visit one of my school friends"; and, ——————

⊠ Summer was ending; in the daytime singing insects hung in every sunbeam; vegetation ~~the nights~~ was nightly heavy with dense globes of dew; & after showers creeping damps & twilight chills came up from the hollows.

carriage could be heard descending the hill on the Hintock side, soon to turn into the lane leading out of the high-way, & then into the "drong" which led out of the lane to the house where she was.

A ~~fast~~ spasm passed through Grace. The Daphnean instinct, exceptionally strong in her as a girl, had been revived by her widowed seclusion; & it was not lessened by her ~~lecture~~ apparent sentiments towards the comer, and her regard for another man. Not three minutes after that voice had been heard, her slim form, neatly wrapped up from observation, might have been seen passing out of the back door of Melbury's house. Thence she skimmed up the garden-path, through the gap in the hedge, & into the mossy cart-track under the trees which led into the depth of the woods.

The leaves upon the overhead were now in their latter green - so opaque that it was darker at some of the densest spots than in winter-time, not a crevice existing by which a ray could get down to the ground. But in open places she could see well enough. The plantations were always weird at this hour of ~~the~~ one — more spectral far than in winter the leafless season, when there were fewer masses & more minute linearity. The smooth surfaces of glossy ~~leaves of ivy~~ plants came out like weak listless eyes; there were strange faces & figures from expiring lights that had somehow wandered into the canopied obscurity; while now & then low peeps of the sky between the trunks were like sheeted shapes, & on the tips of boughs sat faint cloven tongues.

But Grace's fear just now was not imaginative or spiritual; & she

heeded these impressions but little. She went on as silently as she could, avoiding the depressions hollows wherein leaves had accumulated, & stepping upon soundless moss & grass-tufts. She paused breathlessly once or twice, & fancied that she could hear, above the sound of her strumming pulse, the rebuke containing fifty fires burning in all the gate of her father's premises. She hastened on again.

The Hintock woods £ owned by Mrs Charmond were presently left behind, & those into which she next plunged were divided from the latter by a bank from whose top the hedge had long ago perished — starved for want of sun. It was with some caution that Grace now walked, though she was quite free from any of the commonplace timidities of her ordinary pilgrimages to such spots. She feared no lurking harms, but that her effort would be all in vain, & her return to the house rendered imperative.

She had walked between three & four miles when that prescriptive comfort & relief to wanderers in woods — a distant light — broke at last upon her searching eyes. It was so very small as to be almost sinister to a stranger, but to her it was what she sought. She pushed forward & the dim outline of a dwelling was disclosed.

The house was a square cot of one storey only, sloping up on all sides to a chimney in the midst. It had formerly been the home of a charcoal-burner, in times when that fuel was still used in the large county-houses. Its only appurtenance was a paled enclosure, there being no garden, the shade of the trees

preventing the growth of vegetables. She advanced to the window whence the rays of light proceeded; & the shutters being as yet unclosed she could survey the whole interior through the panes.

The room within was kitchen parlour & bedroom all in one, the natural sandstone floor of which was worn into hills & dales by long reading; so that none of the furniture stood level, & the table slanted like a desk. A fire burnt on the hearth, in front of which revolved the skinned carcase of a rabbit, suspended by a string from a nail. Leaning with one arm on the mantel-shelf stood Winterborne, his eyes on the roasting animal, his face so rapt that speculation could build nothing on it concerning his thoughts, more than that they were not with the scene before him. She thought his features had changed a little since she saw them last. The firelight did not enable her to see perceive that they were positively haggard.

Grace's throat emitted a gasp of gladness relief at finding the result so nearly as she had hoped. She went to the door & tapped lightly.

He seemed to be accustomed to the noises of woodpeckers, squirrels, & such small creatures, for he took no notice of her tiny signal; & she knocked again. This time he came & opened the door. When the light of the room fell upon her face he started; & hardly knowing what he did, crossed the threshold to her, placing his hands upon her two arms; while surprise, joy affection, alarm, sadness, ~~remorse~~ chased through him by turns. With Grace it was the same: even in this stress there was the fact that they had met again; "Thus they stood:

Long tears upon their faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight."

He broke the silence by saying in a whisper, "Come in."

"No no, Giles," she answered, hurriedly stepping yet further back from the door. "I am passing by – & I have called on you. – I won't enter. Will you help me? I am afraid. I want to get by a round about way to Sherton, & so to Exbury. I have a schoolfellow there – but I cannot get to Sherton alone. O if you will only accompany me a little way! Don't condemn me Giles, & be offended! I was obliged to come to you because – I have no other help near. Three months ago you were my lover: now you are only my friend. The law has stepped in, & forbidden what we thought of. It must not be. But we can act honestly, & yet you can be my friend for one little hour? I have no other –"

She could get no further. Covering her eyes with one hand, by an effort of repression she wept a silent trickle, without a sigh or sob. Winterborne took her other hand. "What has happened?" he said.

"He has come."

There was a stillness as of death, till Winterborne asked, "You mean this, Grace – that I am to help you to get away?"

"Yes," said she. "Appearance is no matter, when the reality is right. I have said to myself I can trust you."

Giles knew from this that she did not suspect his treachery – if it could be called such – earlier in the summer, year when they met for the last time as lovers; & in the intensity of his contrition for that tender wrong he determined to deserve her faith now at least, & so wipe

out that reproach from his conscience. "I'll come at once," he said. "I'll light a lantern." Harris

He unhooked a dark lantern from a nail under the eaves, & she did not notice how his hand shook with the slight strain, or dream that in making this offer he was taxing a convalescence which could ill-afford such self-sacrifice. The lantern was lit & they started.

Chapter XLI.

The first hundred yards of their course lay under motionless trees, whose upper foliage ~~the leaves of which~~ began to hiss with falling drops of rain. By the time that they emerged upon a glade it rained heavily.

"This is awkward," said Grace, with a little laugh of sorry gaiety.

Winterborne stopped. "Grace," he said preserving a strictly business manner which belied him; "you cannot go to Sherton to-night."

"But I must!"

"Why?" It is nine miles from here. "It's almost an impossibility in this rain."

"True — why," she replied mournfully (at the end of a silence). "What is reputation to me?"

"Now hearken," said Giles quickly. "You won't — go back to your —"

"No, no, no! Don't make me!" she cried piteously

"Then let us turn". They slowly retraced their steps, & again stood before his door. "Now this house from this moment is yours, & not mine," he said deliberately, "I have a place near by where I can stay very well."

Her face had drooped. "Oh," she murmured as she saw the dilemma, "what have I done!"

There was a smell of something burning within, & he looked through the window. The rabbit was beginning to char. "Please go in and attend (that he had been cooking to coax a weak appetite)

to it," he said. "Do what you like. Now I go. You will find everything about the hut that is necessary."

"But Giles – your supper", she exclaimed. "An outhouse would do for me – anything – till to-morrow at daybreak!"

He signified a negative. "I tell you to go in – you may catch ague out here in your delicate state. You can give me my supper through the window, if you feel well enough. I'll wait a while."

He gently urged her to pass the doorway, & was relieved when he saw her within the room sitting down. Without ~~entering~~ so much as ~~If ever Whitehorse was moved~~ crossing the threshold himself he closed the door upon her, & turned the key in the lock. Tapping at the window he signified that she should open ~~waited till she opened~~ the casement, & when she had done this he handed in the key to her.

"You are locked in," he said; "and your own mistress" ["Do you feel better?" he went on; "if so, & you wish to give me some of your supper, please do. If not, it is of no importance. I can get some elsewhere."

[Even in her trouble she could not refrain from a faint smile at his scrupulousness, as she took the door-key. ~~The sense that he was to be attended~~ A grateful sense of his kindness stirred her to action, though she only knew half what that kindness really was. At the end of some ten minutes she again came to the window, pushed it open, & said in a whisper "Giles!" He at once emerged from the shade, & saw that she was preparing to ~~hand~~ hand him his share of the meal upon a plate.

"I don't like to treat you so hardly" she murmured with deep regret in her words as she heard the rain pattering on the leaves. "But – I suppose it is best to arrange like this?" ["Oyes," he said quickly. "I feel that I could never have reached Sherton."

"It was impossible."

giving.)

"Are you sure you have a snug ~~place~~ place out there?" ~~stammered~~ (with renewed mis-
~~How terrible~~

"Quite. Have you found everything you want? I am afraid it is rather rough accommodation."

Can I notice defects? I have long passed that stage, & you know it, Giles, or you ought to."

His eyes sadly contemplated her face as its pale responsiveness modulated through a crowd of expressions that showed only too clearly what ~~tenseness~~ a pitch she was strung. If ever Winterborne's heart fretted his bosom it was at the sight of a perfectly defenceless creature conditioned by such circumstances. He forgot his own misery in the satisfaction of having at least found her a shelter. He took his plate & cup from her hands, saying, "Now I'll push the shutter to, & you will find an iron pin on the inside, which you must fix with the bolt. Do not stir in the morning till I come & call you."

~~But as he~~ She expressed an alarmed hope that he would not go very far away.

"O no – I shall be quite within hail," said Winterborne.

She bolted the window as directed, & he retreated. His snug place proved to be a wretched little shelter of the roughest kind, formed of some bundles thatched with brake-fern. Underneath were dry sticks, hay, & other litter of the kind, upon which he sat down; & there in the dark tries to eat his meal. But his appetite was quite gone. He pushed the plate aside, and ~~afterwards~~ shook up the hay & sacks, so as to form a rude couch, on which he lay down himself down to sleep, for it was getting late. The days being long at this season.

But sleep he could not, for many reasons, of which not the least was thoughts of his charge. He sat up, &

look towards the cot through the damp obscurity. With all its external features the same as usual he could scarcely believe that it contained the dear friend — he would not use a warmer name — who had come to him so unexpectedly and, he could not half admitting, so rashly.

He had not ventured to ask her any particulars; but the position was pretty clear without them. Though social human law had negatived for ever their opening paradise of the previous June, it was not without stoical pride that he accepted the present trying conjuncture. There was one man on earth in whom she believed absolutely, & he was that man. That this crisis could end in nothing but sorrow was a view for a moment effaced by this triumphant thought of her trust in him; & the purity of the affection with which he responded to that trust rendered him more than proof against any frailty that besieged him in relation to her.

The rain, which had never ceased, now drew his attention by beginning to drop through the meagre screen that covered him. He rose to attempt some remedy for this discomfort; but the trembling of his knees & the throbbing of his pulse told him that in his weakness he was unable to pence against the storm, & he lay down to bear it as best he might. He was angry ~~Others impenitence~~ with himself for his feebleness — he who had been so strong. It was imperative that she should know nothing of his present state, & to do that she must not see his face by daylight, for its pallor would inevitably betray him.

The next morning accordingly, when it was hardly light, he rose

& dragged his stiff limbs about the ~~premises~~ precincts, preparing for her every thing she could require for getting breakfast within. On the bench outside the window-sill, he placed water, wood, & other necessaries, writing with a piece of chalk beside them. 'It is best that I should not see you. Put my breakfast on the bench. ~~I will come again in the evening~~.'

at ~~Six~~ seven o'clock he tapped at her window as he had promised, retreating at once that she might not catch sight of him. But from his shelter under the boughs he could see her very well, when, in response to his signal, she opened the window & the light fell upon her face. The languid largeness of her eyes showed that her sleep had been little more than his own, & the pinkness of their lids, that her waking hours had not been free from tears. She read the writing, seemed, he thought, disappointed, but took up the materials he had provided, evidently thinking him come very off. Giles waited on, ~~assured~~ assured that a girl who, in spite of her culture, knew what country life was, would find no difficulty in the simple preparations of their food. ~~He was not disappointed~~.

Within the cot it was all very much as he conjectured, though Grace had slept much longer than he. After the loneliness of the night she would have been glad to see him, but appreciating his feeling when she read the writing, she made no attempt to recall him. She found abundance of provisions laid in, his plan being to replenish his battery weekly, & this being the day after the ~~provision~~ victualling-van had called from Sherton. When the meal was ready she put what he required outside, as she had done with the supper, and

⁂ Autumn this year was coming in with rains, ~~and it seemed~~. Gazing planning in her enforced idleness from the one window of the living room, she could now then see various small members of the animal community that lived unmolested there — creatures of hair, fluff, & scale; the toothed kind & the billed kind; underground creatures jointed & ringed — circumambulating the hut under the impression that nobody Giles having gone away, nobody was there; & eyeing it inquisitively with a view to winter quarters. Watching these neighbours who knew neither law nor sin distracted her a little from her trouble; and

notwithstanding her longing to see him, withdrew from the window promptly, & left him to himself. It had been a leaden dawn, & the rain now ~~came on again steadily~~ steadily renewed its fall. As she heard no more of Winterborne she concluded that he had gone away to his daily work ~~forgetting~~ and forgotten that he had promised to accompany her to Sherton — an erroneous conclusion, for he remained all day by force of his condition within fifty yards of where she was. The morning wore on, & in her doubt when to start, & how to travel, she lingered yet, keeping the door carefully bolted lest an intruder should discover her. Locked In this place she was ~~safe at any rate~~ comparatively safe, & doubted if she would be safe elsewhere.

The humid gloom of an ordinary wet day was doubled by the ever shade & drip of the leafage [opposite] She managed to while away some portion of the afternoon ~~her thoughts~~, by putting Giles' home in order, & making little improvements which she deemed that he would value when she was gone. At last the light lessened, & she made up a larger fire for the Autumn was beginning & it was chilly. As soon as it was too dark to discern the human countenance there came to the window to her great delight a tapping which she knew to be his.

She opened the casement instantly & put out her hand though she could only just perceive his outline. He clasped her fingers, & she noticed the heat of his palm, "He has been walking", she thought, "to get here quickly".

"My dear & good Giles", she said,

Chapter XLII (continued.)

At last the daylight lessened, & she made up a larger fire, for the evenings were chilly. As soon as it was too dark — which was comparatively early — to discern the human countenance in this shadowy place of shadows, there came to the window, to her great delight, a tapping which she knew from its method to be Giles's.

She opened the casement instantly, & put out her hand to him, though she could only just perceive his outline. He clasped her fingers, & she noticed the heat of his palm, & its shakiness.

"He has been walking fast, in order to get here quickly," she thought.

"My dear & good Giles!" she burst out impulsively.

"Anybody would have done it for you," replied Winterborne, with as much matter-of-fact as he could summon. How could she know that He had just crawled out from the straw of the shelter hard by; & that the heat of his hand was feverishness.

"About my getting to Exbury?" she said.

"I have been thinking," responded Giles, with tender deference, "that you had better stay where you are for the present, if you wish not to be caught. I need not tell you that the place is yours as long as you like; & perhaps in a day or two, finding you absent, he will go away. At any rate, in two or three days I could do anything to assist — such as make inquiries, or go a great way towards Sherton-Abbas with you; for the cider-season will soon be coming on, & I want to run down to the Vale

to see how the crops are, & I shall go by Sherton road. But for a day or two I am busy here."

(He was hoping that by the time mentioned he would be strong enough to engage himself actively on her behalf.) "I hope you do not feel overmuch melancholy in being a prisoner?"

She declared that she did not mind it; but she sighed.

From long acquaintance they could read each other's heart-symptoms like books of large type. "I fear you are sorry you came," said Giles, "& that you think I should have advised you more firmly than I did not to stay."

"O no, dear dear friend," answered Grace, with a heaving bosom. "Don't think that that is what I regret. What I regret is my enforced treatment of you — dislodging you, excluding you from your own house. Why should I not speak out? You know what I feel for you — what I have felt for no other living man, what I shall never feel for a man again! But as I have vowed myself to somebody else than you, & cannot be released, I must behave as I do behave, & keep that vow. I am not bound to him by any divine law, after what he has done; but I have promised, & I will pay."

The rest of the evening was passed in his handing her such things as she would require the next day, & in occupation which diverted her mind to some degree from the pathetic views of her attitude towards him & of her life in general. The only infringement — if infringement it could be called — of his predetermined bearing towards her was an involuntary pressing of

her hand to his lips when she put it out through the casement to bid him good-night. He knew she was weeping, though he could not see her tears.

She again entreated his forgiveness for so selfishly appropriating the cottage. "But it would only be for a day or two more, she thought, since go she must. ~~In a week, at the outside, I should be discovered if I stayed here; & I think that by law he could compel me to return to him.~~"

He replied yearningly, "I – I don't like you to go away!" ~~They would not find you.~~"

"O Giles," said she, "I know – I know! But – I am a woman, & you are a man. I cannot speak more plainly. 'Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report' – you know what is in my mind, because you know me so well."

"Yes Grace, yes. I do not at all mean that the question between us has not been settled by the fact of your marriage turning out hopelessly unalterable. ~~holding good after all.~~ I merely meant – well, a feeling – no more."

"In a week, at the outside, I should be discovered if I stayed here; & I think that by law he could compel me to return to him."

"Yes. Perhaps ~~so~~ you are right. Go when you wish, dear Grace."

His last words that evening were a hopeful remark that all might be well with her yet; that Mr Fitzpiers would not intrude upon her life, if he found that his presence cost her so much pain. Then the window was closed, the shutters folded, & the rustle of his footsteps died away.

No sooner had she retired to rest that night than the wind began

⁂ She seemed almost to be apart from herself – a vacuous duplicate only. The ~~old~~ recent self of physical animation & clear intentions was not there.

to rise, & after a few preliminary blasts to be accompanied by rain. The wind grew more violent, & the storm went on it was difficult to believe that only no opaque body, but only an invisible colourless thing was trampling & climbing over the roof, springing making branches creak, out of the trees upon the chimney, popping its head into the flue & shrieking and blaspheming at every corner of the walls. The assailant was as in the story, a spectre which could be felt but not seen. She had never before been so struck with the devilry of a gusty night in a word, became she had never been so entirely alone in spirit as she was now. Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was swayed so low as to smite the roof, in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary, & to be followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound. To all this weather Giles must be more or less exposed; how much she did not know.

At last Grace could hardly endure the idea of such a hardship in relation to him. Whatever he was suffering, it was she who had caused it; he had vacated his home on account of her. She was not worth such self-sacrifice; she should not have accepted it of him. And then, as her anxiety increased with increasing thought, there returned upon her mind some incidents of her late intercourse with him, which she had heeded but little at the time. The look of his face — what had there been about his face which seemed different from its appearance of yore? Was it not thinner, less rich in hue, less like that of ripe Autumn's bronze to which she had formerly likened him? whom compared And his voice; she had distinctly noticed a change in tone. And his

gait; surely it had been feebler, stiffer, more like the gait of a weary man. That slight occasional noise she had heard in the day, & attributed to squirrels; it might have been this cough after all.

Thus conviction took root in her perturbed mind that Winterborne was ill, or had been so, & that he had carefully concealed his condition from her that she might have no scruples about accepting a hospitality which by the nature of the case expelled her entertainer. "My own born true love — my dear kind friend!" she cried tenderly. "O it shall not be — it shall not be!"

She hastily wrapped herself up, & obtained a light, with which she entered the adjoining room, the cot possessing only one floor. Setting down the candle on the table here she went to the door with the key in her hand, & placed it in the lock. Before turning it she paused, with her fingers still clutching it; & pressing her other hand to her forehead she fell into thought.

A tatter on the window, caused by the tree-droppings blowing against it, brought her indecision to a close. She turned the key, & opened the door.

The darkness was intense, seeming to touch her pupils like a substance. She stood listening with parted lips, & holding the door in one hand; till at last her eyes, growing accustomed to the obscurity, discerned the wild brandishing of their boughs by the adjoining trees. At last she cried lonely, with an effort, "Giles! You may come in!"

There was no immediate answer to her cry, & Giles did not come. She only now became aware how heavy the rainfall had been & was; the dripping of the eaves splashed like a fountain. Overpowered by her own temerity, Grace retreated quickly, shut the door, & stood looking on the floor. But it was not for long. She

again lifted the latch, & with far more determination than at first.

"Giles, Giles!" she cried out with the full strength of her voice, & without any of the shamefacedness that had characterized her first cry; "O come in - come in! Where are you? ..... I have been wicked. I have thought too much of myself ..... Do you hear? I dont want to keep you out any longer - I cannot bear that you should suffer so..... Gi-i-iles!"

A reply? - it was a reply! Through the darkness & wind a voice reached her, floating upon the weather as though a part of it.

"Here I am - all right! Don't trouble about me."

"Dont you want to come in? Are you not ill? I don't mind what they say, or what they think, any more."

"I am all right" he repeated. "It is not necessary for me to come. Good night, good night!"

Grace sighed, turned & shut the door slowly. Could she have been mistaken about his health? Perhaps, after all, she had perceived a change in him because she had not seen him for so long. Time sometimes did his ageing work in jerks, as she knew. Well, she had done all she could. He would not come in. She retired to rest again.

Chapter XLII

The next morning Grace was at the window early. She felt determined to see him somehow that day, & prepared his breakfast eagerly. Eight o'clock

struck, & she had remembered that he had not come to arouse her by a knocking as usual, her own anxiety having caused her to stir. The breakfast was set in its place without. But he did not come to take it; & she waited on. Nine o'clock arrived, & the breakfast was cold; & still there was no Giles. A thrush who had been repeating himself a good deal on an opposite bush for some time, came & took a morsel from the plate & bolted it, & waited, looked around, & took another. At ten o'clock she drew in the tray, & sat down to her own solitary meal. He must have been called away on business early, the rain having cleared off.

Yet she would have liked to assure herself by thoroughly exploring the precincts of the hut, that he was nowhere in its vicinity; but as the day was comparatively fine the dread lest some stray passenger or woodman should encounter her in such a reconnoitre paralyzed her ~~mind~~ wish. The solitude was further accentuated to-day by the stopping of the clock for want of winding, & the fall into the chimney-corner of flakes of soot loosened by the rains. At noon she heard a slight rustling outside the window, & found that it was caused by an eft which had crept out of the leaves to bask in the last sun-rays that would be worth having till the following May.

She continually peeped out through the lattice, but could see little. In front lay the brown leaves of last year, & upon them some yellowish-green ones of this season lying upon them, that had been prematurely blown

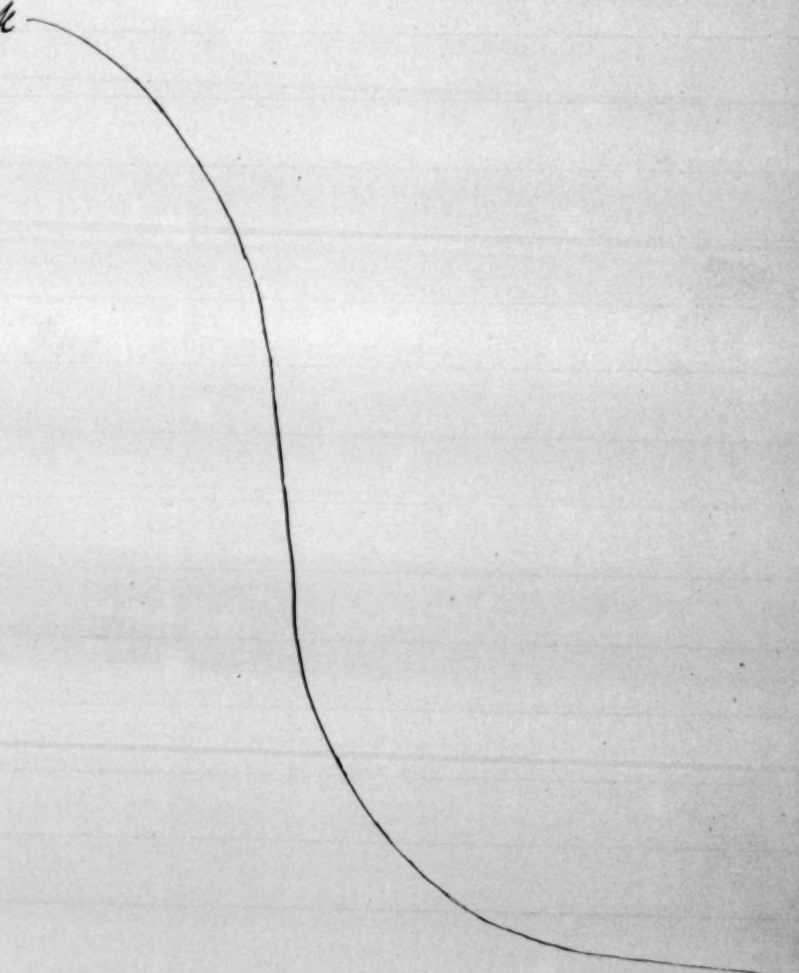
down by the gale. Above stretched an old beech, with vast armpits, & great pocket-holes (where branches had been amputated in past times) in its sides; a black slug was trying to climb it. Dead boughs were scattered about like ichthyosauri in a museum, & beyond them were perishing wood-vine stems resembling old ropes.

From the other window all she could see were more trees, jacketed with lichen, & stockinged with moss. at their roots were stemless, yellow fungi like lemons & apricots, & tall fungi with more stem than stool. Next were more trees close together, wrestling for existence, their branches disfigured with wounds resulting from their mutual rubbings & blows. It was the struggle between these neighbours that she had heard in the night. Beneath them were the rotting stumps of those of the group that had been vanquished long ago, rising from their mossy setting like decayed teeth from green gums. Further on were other tufts of moss in islands divided by the shed leaves — variety upon variety, dark green & pale green; moss like little fir-trees, like plush, like malachite stars; like nothing on earth except moss.

The strain upon Grace's mind in various ways was so great on this the most desolate day she had passed there, that she felt it would be well-nigh impossible to spend another in such circumstances. The evening came at last; the sun, when its chin was on the earth, formed an opening through which to pierce the shade, & stretched irradiated fangs across the damp atmosphere, making the wet trunks shine, & throwing splotches of ruddy light on the

caves beneath the beech that ~~it~~ they were turned ~~them~~ to gory hues. When night at last arrived, & with it the time for his return, she was nearly broken down with suspense. &

The simple evening meal, partly tea, partly supper, which Grace had prepared, stood waiting upon the hearth; & yet Giles did not come. It was now nearly twenty-four hours since she had seen him. As the room grew darker, & only the fire-light broke against the gloom of the walls, she was convinced that it would be beyond her staying power to pass the night without hearing ~~something~~ from him or from ~~some body~~ others. Yet eight o'clock



drew on, & his form at the window had not appeared.

The meal remained untasted. Suddenly rising before from the hearth of smouldering embers, where she had been crouching with her hands clasped over her knees, she crossed the room, unlocked the door, & listened. Every breath of wind had ceased with the decline of day, but the rain had resumed the steady dripping of the night before. Grace might have stood there five minutes when she fancied she heard that old sound, a cough, at no great distance; & it was presently repeated. If it were Winterborne's he must be near her; why then had he not visited her?

A horrid misgiving that he could not visit her took possession of Grace, & she looked up anxiously for the lantern, which was hanging above her head. To light it & go in the direction of the sound would be the obvious way to solve the dread problem; but the conditions made her hesitate, & in a moment a cold sweat pervaded her at further sounds from the same quarter. [They were low mutterings; at first like persons in conversation, but gradually resolving themselves into varieties of one voice. It was an endless monologue, like that we sometimes hear from inanimate nature in deep secret places where water flows, or where ivy leaves flap against stones; but by degrees she was convinced that the voice was Winterborne's. Yet who could be his listener, so mute & patient; for though he argued so rapidly & persistently, nobody replied. A dreadful enlightenment spread through the mind of Grace. "It is he," she cried as she hastily prepared herself to go out; "how in her anguish) selfishly correct I am always — too, too correct! Cruel

propriety is killing the dearest heart that ever woman clasped to her own.

While speaking thus to herself she had lit the lantern, & hastening out without further thought took the direction whence the mutterings had proceeded. The course was marked by a little path, which ended at a distance of about forty yards in a small erection not much larger than a shock of corn, of hurdles such as were frequent in the woods & copses when the cutting season was going on. It was too slight even to be called a hovel, & was not high enough to stand upright in; appearing in short to be erected for the temporary shelter of fuel. The side facing toward Grace was open, & turning the light upon the interior she beheld what her prescient fear had pictured in snatches all the way thither.

Upon the straw within, Winterborne lay in his clothes, just as she had seen him during the whole of her stay here, except that his hat was off, & his hair matted & wild. Both his clothes & the straw were saturated with rain. His arms were flung over his head; & his face was flushed to an unnatural crimson. His eyes had a burning brightness, & though they met her own, she perceived that he did not recognize her.

"O my Giles, ~~friend~~, she cried, "what have I done to you! ~~He better than indeed~~." But she stopped no longer even to reproach herself. She saw that the first thing to be thought of was to get him in-doors.

How Grace performed that labour she never could have exactly explained. But by dint of clasping her arms round him, rearing him into a sitting posture & straining her strength to the uttermost, she put him on one of the hurdles that was loose alongside, & taking the end of it in both her

All that a muse could do Grace did; & the power to express her attitude in action, inexpressible though the happiest word, beautiful as music satisfaction to the soul. She walked like a

hands dragged him along the path to the entrance of the hut, & after a pause of for breath, in at the doorway. Taylor

It was somewhat singular that Giles in his semi-conscious state acquiesced unresistingly ~~with perfect unanimity~~ in all that she did. But he never for a moment recognised her; continuing his rapid conversation to himself, & seeming to look upon her as some angel, or other supernatural creature of the visionary world in which he was mentally living. The undertaking occupied her more than ten minutes; but by that time, to her great thankfulness, he was in the inner room lying on the bed, his damp outer clothing removed.

Then the unhappy Grace regarded him by the light of the candle. There was something in his look which agonized her, in the rush of his thoughts, accelerating their speed from minute to minute. He seemed to be passing through the universe of ideas like a comet; erratic, inapprehensible, untraceable.

Grace's distraction was almost as great as his. In a few moments she firmly believed he was dying. Unable to withstand her impulse she knelt down beside him, kissed his hands, & his face, & his hair, exclaiming in a low voice, "how could I — how could I!"

Her timid morality had, indeed, underrated his chivalry till now, though she knew him so well. The purity of his nature, his freedom from the grosser passions, his scrupulous delicacy, had never been fully understood by Grace till this strange self-sacrifice in lonely juxtaposition to herself was revealed. The perception of it added something that was little short of reverence to the deep affection for him of a woman who herself had more of

·X· ¶ All that a tender nurse could do Grace did; & the power to express her solicitude in action, unconscious though he suffered was, brought her mournful satisfaction. She bathed his hot head, wiped his perspiring hands, moistened his lips, cooled his grey eyelids, sponged his heated skin & administered ~~all that~~ whatever she could find in the house that her imagination could conceive as likely to be in any way alleviating. That she might have been the cause, or partially the cause, of ~~his~~ all this, ~~was not added~~ misery interfused with ~~&~~ her sorrow.

⊗ Yet she dreaded to leave her patient, & the minutes raced past, & yet she postponed her departure. At last, when it was to after eleven o'clock, Winterborne fell into a fitful sleep, & it seemed to afford her an opportunity.

She hastily made him as comfortable ——

Artemis than of ~~the~~ Aphrodite in her constitution. X [opposite]

[Six months before this date a scene almost similar in its mechanical parts had been ~~exacte~~ enacted at Hintock House. It was between a pair of persons most intimately connected in their lives with these. Outwardly like as it had been, it was yet infinite in spiritual indifference; though a woman's devotion had been common to both. [Grace rose from her knees attitude of affection, & bracing her energies saw that something practical must immediately be done. ~~XXX~~ Much as she would have liked, in the emotion of the moment, to keep him entirely ~~to~~ herself, medical assistance was necessary as whilst there remained a possibility of preserving him alive. Such assistance was fatal to her own concealment; but even had the chance of benefiting him been less than it was, she would have run the hazard for his sake. The question was where should she get a medical man, competent & near.

There was one such man, & only one, within accessible distance; a man who, if it were possible to save Winterborne's life, ~~was the~~ had the brain most likely to do it. If human pressure could bring him, that man ought to must be brought to the sick ~~man~~ Giles's side. The attempt should be made. ~~She would not be absent. I do so~~.

X [opposite] ~~She made hastily made poor~~ Giles as comfortable as she could, put on her things, cut a new candle from the bunch hanging in the cupboard, & having set it up & placed it so that the light did not fall upon his eyes she closed the door & started.

The spirit of Winterborne seemed to keep her company, & banish all fears & darkness from her mind. The rain had imparted a phosphorescence to the pieces of touchwood ~~She did not however venture to run any portion of~~ & rotting leaves that lay about her path, which, as scattered by her feet, spread abroad like spilt milk. She would not run the any hazard of losing her way ———

losing her way by plunging into any short cut unfrequented track through the
trees dense parts of the woodland; but followed a more open course which even-
tually brought her to the highway. Once here she ran along with great speed,
animated by a devoted purpose which had much about it that was stoical; &
it was with scarcely any faltering of spirit that, after an hours pro-
gress, she passed over Rubdown Hill, & so onward towards that same
Hintock, & that same house, from out of which she had fled a few days before
in irresistible alarm. But that had happened which, above all other
things of change, could make her deliberately frustrate her plan of
flight, & sink all regard of personal consequences.

One specialty of Fitzpiers's was respected by Grace as much
as ever; namely his professional skill. In this she was right. Had his persistence equalled
his insight instead of being the spasmodic & fitful thing it was, fame
& fortune need never have remained a wish with him. His freedom
from conventional errors & crusted prejudices had indeed been such
as to retard rather than accelerate his advance in Hintock & its
neighbourhood, where people could not believe that nature merely
effected cures, & that the doctor's business was only to smooth the way.

It was past midnight when Grace arrived opposite her
father's house, now & then temporarily occupied by her husband, unless
he had already gone away. Ever since her emergence from the dense
plantations about Winterborne's residence a pervasive lightness had

⁂ She faltered, & passed with her hand on her heart, in spite of herself. Could she call to her presence the very cause of all her present troubles! Alas — old Jones was seven miles off, Giles was possibly dying; what else could she do?

hung in the damp autumn sky, in spite of the vault of cloud, signifying that a moon of some age was shining above it. The two white gates were distinct, & the white balls on the pillars, & the puddles & damp ruts left by the recent rain had a corpse-eyed phosphorescent luminousness. She entered by the lower gate & crossed to the wing wherein the apartments that had been hers since her marriage were situate, the quadrangle, till she stood under a window which, if her husband were in the house, gave light to his bed-chamber. ⁂

It was in a perspiration wrought even more by consciousness than by exercise that she picked up some gravel, threw it at the panes, & waited to see the result. The night-bell which had been fixed when Fitzpiers first took up his residence there still remained; but as it had fallen into disuse with the collapse of his practice, & his elopement, she did not venture to pull it now.

Whoever slept in the room had heard her first signal, slight as it was. In half a minute the window was opened, & a voice said "Yes?" enquiringly. She recognised her husband in the speaker at once. Her effort was now to disguise her own accents.

"Doctor," she said in as unusual a tone as she could command, "a man is dangerously ill in the One-Chimney Hut, beyond outlawards out towards Delborough, & you must go to him at once in all mercy!"

"I will," he readily.

The alacrity, surprise, & pleasure expressed in his reply amazed her for a moment. But in truth they denoted the sudden relief of a man who, having got back from erratic abandonment to fearful joys, found the soothing routine

of professional practice unexpectedly opening anew to him. The highest desire of his soul just now was for a respectable drudgery. If his first since his return, life of painstaking. summons had been to attend upon a cat or dog, he would scarcely have refused it in the circumstances.

"Do you know the way?" she asked.

"Yes" said he.

"One-Chimney Hut," she repeated. "and immediately!"

"Yes; yes," said Fitzpiers.

Grace remained no longer. She passed out of the white gate without slamming it, & hastened on her way back. Her husband, then, had re-entered re-entered her father's house. How he had been able to effect a reconciliation with the old man, what were the terms of the treaty between them, she could not so much as conjecture. Some sort of truce must have been entered into; that was all she could say. But close as the question lay to her own life there was a more urgent one which banished it, & she traced her steps quickly along the meandering bracken ways.

Meanwhile Fitzpiers was preparing to leave the house. The state of his mind, over & above this professional zeal, was peculiar. At Grace's first remark he had not recognized or suspected her presence; but as she at the latter went on he was awakened to the great resemblance of the speaker's voice to his wife's. He had taken in such good faith the statement of the household on his arrival, that she had gone on a visit for a time, because she could not at once bring her mind to be reconciled to him, that he could not quite actually believe this corner to be she. It was one of the features of Fitzpiers's

repentant humour at this date that on receiving the explanation of her absence he had made no ~~effort to follow her~~ attempt to outrage her feelings by following her; though nobody had informed him how very shortly her departure had preceded his entry, & of all that might have been inferred from her precipitancy.

Melbury, after much alarm & consideration, had decided not to follow her either. He sympathized with her flight, much as he deplored it; & the tragic colour of the more recent antecedent events that he had been a great means of creating checked his instinct to interfere. He prayed & trusted that she had got into no danger on her way (as he supposed) to Sherton, & thence to Exbury; if that were the place she had gone to, abandoning all enquiry which the strangeness of her departure would have made natural. A few months before this time a performance by Grace of one-tenth the magnitude of this would have aroused him to unwearied investigation.

It was in the same spirit that he had tacitly assented to Fitzpiers's domiciliation there. The two men had not met face to face, but Mrs Melbury had proposed Fernly as an intermediary, who made the surgeon's re-entrance comparatively easy to him. Everything was provisional, & nobody asked questions. Fitzpiers had come in the performance of a plan of penitence which had originated in circumstances hereafter to be explained; this self-mortification was deliberate; to the new bass string & as soon as a call reached him from the bedside of a dying man his desire was to set to work & do as much good as he could possible with the least fuss or show. He therefore

refrained from calling up a stable man to get ready any horse or gig, & set out for One-Chimney Hut as fast as Grace had done.

Chapter XLIII.

She re-entered the hut, flung off her bonnet & cloak, & approached the sufferer. He had begun anew those terrible mutterings, & his hands were cold. As soon as she saw him there returned to her that agony of mind which the stimulus of her journey had thrown off for a time.

Could he really be dying? She bathed him, kissed him, forgot all things but the fact that he was dying. Here he was who had (loved her more than the mere lover who have loved; had) married her for love, who had cared more for her than she had thought of caring, & this self-respect? This mood continued till she heard quick smart footsteps without; she knew whose footsteps they were.

Grace sat on the inside of the bed against the wall, holding Giles's hand, so that when the husband entered the patient lay between herself & him. He stood transfixed at first, noticing Grace only. Slowly he despised his glance; & discerned who the prostrate man was. Strangely enough, though Grace's distaste for her husband's company had amounted almost to dread, & had culminated in actual flight, at this moment her last (least) feeling was personal. Sensitive femininity was no matter for annihilated by eclipsed by self-effacing purpose; & that it was a husband who stood there was forgotten. The first look that possessed her face was relief; & satisfaction at the presence of the physician obliterated thought of the man. Hurt only returned in the form of a sub-conscionsness that did not interfere with her words.

"Is he dying — is there any hope?" she cried.

"Grace!" said Fitzpiers in an indescribable whisper, that was more than invocating — not quite deprecatory.

He was arrested by the spectacle, not so much in its intrinsic character — though that was striking enough to a man who called himself the husband of the ~~sick man's~~ sufferer's friend & nurse — but in its character as the counterpart ~~of~~ of one that was had taken its hour many months before, in which he had figured as the patient, & the woman had been Felice Charmond.

"Is he in great danger — can you save him?" she cried again.

Fitzpiers aroused himself, came a little nearer, and examined as he stood. His inspection was concluded in a mere glance. Before he spoke he looked at her contemplatively, as to the coming effect of his coming words. "He is dying, he said with dry precision.

"What?" said she.

"Nothing can be done, by me or any other man. It will soon be all over. The extremities are dead already." His eyes still remained fixed on her, the conclusion to which she had come seeming to end his interest, professional & otherwise, in Winterborne for ever.

"But it cannot be! He was well three days ago."

"Not well I suspect. This seems like a secondary attack, which has followed some previous illness — possibly typhoid, — it may have been months ago, or recently.

"Ah — he was not well — you are right. He was ill — he was ill when I came!"

There was nothing more to do or say. She crouched down at the side of the bed, & Fitzpiers took a seat. Thus they remained in silence, & long as it

lasted she never turned her eyes, or apparently her thoughts, at all to her husband. He occasionally murmured, ~~in a sort of abstraction~~ with automatic authority, some slight directions for alleviating the pain of the dying man, which she mechanically obeyed; bending over him during the intervals in silent tears.

Winterborne never recovered consciousness of what was passing; & that he was going became soon perceptible also to her. In less than an hour the delirium ceased; then there was an interval of somnolent painlessness & soft breathing, at the end of which Winterborne passed quietly away.

[White line] Then Fitzpiers broke the silence. "Have you lived here long?" said he.

Grace was wild with sorrow — with all that had befallen her — with the cruelties that had attacked her — with life — with Heaven. She answered at random: "Yes." By what right do you ask?"

"Don't think I claim any right." said Fitzpiers ~~bitterly~~ sadly. "It is for you to do & to say what you choose. I admit, quite as much as you feel, that I am a vagabond — a brute — not worthy ~~of her~~ to possess the smallest fragment of you. But here I am; & I have happened to take sufficient interest in you to make that enquiry."

"He is everything to me!" said Grace, hardly heeding her husband, & laying her hand reverently on the dead man's eyelids, where she kept it a long time, pressing down their lashes with gentle touches, as if she were stroking a little bird.

He watched her awhile; & then glanced round the chamber

where his eyes fell upon a few dressing necessaries that she had brought

"Grace – if I may call you so", he said "I have been already humiliated almost to the depths. ~~When you refused to come~~ since you refused to join me elsewhere, I have come back – I have entered your father's house – & borne all that that cost me without flinching, because I have felt I deserved humiliation. But is there yet a greater humiliation in store for me? You say you have been living here – that he is everything to you. Am I to draw from that the obvious, the extremest ~~the worst~~ inference?"

Triumph at any price is sweet to men & women – especially the latter. It was her first & last opportunity of repaying him for the cruel contumely & which she had borne at his hands so docilely.

"Yes", she answered; & there was that in her subtly compounded nature which made her feel a thrill of pride as she did so.

Yet the moment after she had so mightily ~~greatly~~ belied her character she half repented. Her husband had turned as white as the wall behind him. It seemed as if all that remained to him of life & spirit had been abstracted at a stroke. Yet he did not move, & in his efforts at self-control closed his mouth together as a vice. His determination was fairly successful, though she saw how very much greater than she had expected her triumph had been. Presently he looked across at Winterborne

"Would it startle you to hear," he said, as if he hardly had breath to utter words, "that she who was to me what he was to you is dead also?"

"Dead – dead – She dead!" exclaimed Grace.

"Yes. Felice Chasmond is where this young man is."

"Never!" said Grace vehemently.

He went on without heeding the insinuation: "and I came back to try to make it up with you — but — but ....." Fitzpiers rose, & moved across the room to go away, looking down towards the door with the droop of a man whose hope was turned to despair. In going round the foot of the bed his eye fell upon her face. She was still bending over Winterborne, her face close to the young man's.

"Have you been kissing him during his illness?" asked her husband.

"Yes."

"Since his fevered state set in?"

"Yes."

"On his lips?"

"Yes."

"Then you will do well to take a few drops of this in water as soon as possible." He drew a small phial from his pocket, & offered it to her. Grace returned to shook her head.

"If you don't do as I tell you you may soon be like him."

"I don't care. I wish to die."

"I'll put it here," said Fitzpiers, placing the bottle on a ledge beside him. "The sin of not having warned you will not be upon my head at any rate, amongst many other sins. I am now going, & I will send somebody to you. Your father does not know that you are here, & I shall be bound to tell him so I suppose."

"Certainly."

Fitzpiers left the cot, & the stroke of his feet was soon immersed in the

⁂ No sign of any other comer greeted her ear, the only perceptible sounds being the tiny cracklings of the dead leaves, which, like a feather bed, had not yet done rising, ~~like a feather bed~~ to their normal level where indented by the pressure of her husband's receding foot steps.

silence that pervaded the spot. Grace remained kneeling drooping the hand by which how long, & then she sat up, & covered poor Giles's features, & went towards the door where her husband had stood. It reminded her that she had been struck with the change in his aspect; the extremely intellectual look of his face had always been in it wrought to a finer phase by thinness; she returned to Winterborne's side. & was somewhat accentuated, & a careworn dignity had been superadded. During her meditations another tread approached the door, passed through the outer room, & entered where Grace was. Marty halted at the entrance of the inner chamber where Grace was.

"What – Marty!" said Grace.

"Yes. I have heard," said Marty, whose demeanour had lost all its girlishness under the stroke that seemed almost bitterly to have bruised her.

"He died for me!" murmured Grace heavily.

Marty did not fully comprehend; & she answered, "He belongs to neither of us now. & your beauty is no more powerful with him than my plainness. I have come to help you, ma'am. He never cared for me, & he cared much for you; but he cares for us both alike now."

"Oh don't, don't, Marty!"

Marty said no more, but knelt over Winterborne from the other side.

"Did you meet my bus – Mr Fitzpiers?"

"No."

"Then what brought you here?"

"I come this way sometimes. I have got to go to the further side of the wood this time of the year, & am obliged to get there before four o'clock in the morning, before the horses leave on account of harvesters for work, to heat the oven for the early baking. I have passed by here often at this time."

(begin healing)

Grace looked at her quickly. "Then did you know I was here?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Did you tell anybody?"

"No. I knew you lived in the hut, that he had given it up to ye, & lodged out himself."

"Did you know where he lodged?"

"No. That I could n't find out. Was it at Great Hinton? Delborough?"

"No. It was not there, Marty. Would it had been! It would have saved — saved —" To check her tears She turned, & seeing a book in the window-bench took it up. "Look Marty, this is a Psalter. He was not an outwardly religious man; but he was pure & perfect in his heart. Shall we read a psalm over him?"

"Oyes — we will — With all my heart!"

Grace opened the thin brown book, paper whose leather covers Giles had mainly kept at hand for the convenience of upon its leather covers. She began to read in that rich devotional voice peculiar to women, only on such occasions. When it was over Marty said, "I should like to pray for his soul."

"So should I," said her companion. "But we must not."

"Why? Nobody would know."

Grace could not resist the argument, influenced as she was by the tender melting amends for feelings for having neglected him in the body: & their tender voices united & filled the narrow room with supplicatory murmurs that a Calvinist might have envied. Before they had hardly ended, when & more numerous footfalls were audible; also persons in conversation, one of whom Grace recognised as her father.

She rose, & went to the outer apartment, in which there was only such light as beamed from the inner one. Melbury & Mrs Melbury were standing there.

"I don't reproach you, Grace", said her father, in a voice with an estranged manner, & not at all like his old voice. "What has come upon you & us is beyond reproach, beyond weeping, beyond warning. Perhaps I drove you to it. But I am hurt, I am scourged, I am astonished. In the face of this there is nothing to be said."

Without replying Grace turned & glided back to the inner chamber. "Marty" she said quickly "I cannot look my father in the face until he knows the true circumstances of my life here. Go & tell him — what you have told me — what you saw — that he came up this house to me."

She sat down, her face buried in her hands, & Marty went, after a short absence returned. Then Grace rose, & going out asked her father if he had met her husband.

"Yes," said Melbury.

"And you know all that has happened?"

— Forgive me Grace for suspecting ye of worse than rathness — I ought to know ye better.

"I do. Are you coming with me to what was once your home?"

No. I stay here with him. Take no account of me any more."

The unmerited, perplexing, agitating relations in which she had stood to Winterborne quite lately — brought about by Melbury's own contrivance — could not fail to soften the natural anger of a parent at her more recent doings. "My daughter, things are bad," he rejoined. "But why do you persevere to make 'em worse? What good can you do to Giles by staying here with him? Mind, I ask no questions. I don't inquire why you decided to come here, or anything

as what your course would have been if he had not died, (though I know there's no deliberate harm in it.) As for me, I have lost all claim upon you; & I make no complaint. But I do say that by coming back with me now you will show no less kindness to him, & escape any sound of shame."

"But I don't wish to escape it?"

"If you don't on your own account cannot you wish to on mine & hers? Nobody except our household knows that you have left home. Then why should you by a piece of perverseness bring down my hairs with sorrow to the grave?"

"If it were not for my husband —" she began, moved by his words. "But how can I meet him there? How can any woman who is not a mere man's creature join him after what has taken place?"

"He would go away again rather than keep you out of my home."

"How do you know that, father?"

"We met him on our way here, & he told us so," said Mrs Melbury. He had said something like it before. "He seems very much upset altogether." He

"He declared to her when he came first to our house that he would wait for time & devotion to bring about his forgiveness," said her husband. "That was it, wasn't it Lucy?"

Yes. "That he would not intrude upon you Grace! till you give him absolute permission," Mrs Melbury added.

This antecedent consideration in Fitzpiers was as welcome to Grace as though she did not desire his presence it were unexpected; & she was sorry that by her retaliatory feeling she had

X and at their heels poor Creedle.

"Forgie me, but I cain't rule my mourning nohow as a man should, Mr Melbury," he said. "I haf'nt seen him since Thursday se'night, & have wondered for days & days where he's been keeping. There was I expecting him to come & tell me to wash out the cider-barrels against the making, & there was he..... Well, I've knowed him from table-high; I knowed his father — used to bide about upon two sticks in the sun afore he died! — and now I've seen the end of the family, which we can ill afford to lose, wi' such a scanty lot of good folk in Hintock as we've got. And now Robert Creedle will be nailed up in parish boards 'a b'lieve; and nobody will gluteh down a sigh for he!"

given him a different reason for avoiding her. She made no further objections to accompanying her parents, taking them into the inner room to give them Winterborne a last look, & gathering up the two or three things that belonged to her. While she was doing this the two women came who had been called by Melbury. They started for home, Mary walking & Creedle remaining behind. For a time Grace & her father walked side by side without speaking.

It was just in the blue of the dawn & the chilling tone of the sky was reflected in her cold wet face. The whole wood seemed to be a house of death, pervaded by loss to its uttermost length & breadth. Winterborne was gone & the copses seemed to show the want of him; those young trees, so many of which he had planted, & of which he had spoken so truly when he said that he should fall before they fell, were at that very moment sending out their roots in the direction that he had given them with his subtle hand.

"One thing made it tolerable to us that your husband should come back to the house," said Melbury at last. "The death of Mrs Charmond is dead"

"Ah, yes," said Grace, arousing slightly to the recollection, "he told me so."

"Did he tell you how she died? It was no such death as Giles's. She was shot — by a disappointed lover. It occurred in Switzerland Germany. The unfortunate man shot himself afterwards. He was that South Carolina gentleman of very passionate nature, who used to haunt this place to force her to an interview, & followed her about everywhere. So ends the brilliant Felice Charmond — once a good friend to me be — but no friend to you."

"I can forgive her," said Grace absently. "Did Edgar tell you of this?"

"No. But he put a London newspaper, giving an account of it, on the hall table, folded in such a way that we should see it. It will be in the Sheerton paper this week no doubt". To make the event more solemn still to him he had just before had sharp words with her, & left her. He told Lucy this, as nothing about him appeared in the newspaper. And the cause of the quarrel was, of all people, Marty South." she we've left behind us."

"Do you mean Marty?" Grace spoke the words; but perfunctorily. For pertinent pointed and pointed as ~~Marty~~ not Marty? Melbury's story was, she had no heart for it now.

Melbury persisted in his narrative, to divert her from her present grief, if possible.

"Yes. Marty South." Before he went away she wrote him a letter, which he kept in his pocket a long while before reading. He chanced to pull it out in Mrs Charmond's presence, & read it out loud. It contained something which teased her very much, & that led to the rupture. She was following him to make it up, when she met with her terrible death."

~~Bottle-throw~~. Melbury did not know enough to give the gist of the ~~affair~~ incident, which was that Marty South's letter had been concerning a certain personal adornment common to herself & Mrs Charmond. (Her bullet reached its billet at last.) The scene between Fitzpiers & Felice had been sharp as only a scene can be which arises out of the mortification of one woman by another in the presence of a lover. True, Marty had not effected it by word of mouth; the charge about the locks of hair was made simply by her letter to Fitzpiers reading him. Fitzpiers being read aloud ~~by the latter~~ to Felice in the playfully ironical tones of one who had become a little weary of his situation, & was finding his friend, in the phrase of George Herbert, a "flat delight." He

∴ having seen but one living thing on their way, a squirrel, which ~~ran up its tree in fear~~ did not run up its tree, but, dropping the Sweet-chestnut it carried, (stamped with its hind legs) & cried chut-chut-chut, and ~~sat~~ on the ground.

had stroked those false tresses with his hand many a time without knowing them to be transplanted, & it was impossible when the discovery was so abruptly made, to avoid being finely satirical, despite her generous disposition.

6/

On his abrupt departure

That was how it had begun; & tragedy had been its end. She had followed him to the station; but the train was gone; & in travelling through Switzerland to Baden in search of him she had met his rival, whose reproaches led to an altercation, & the death of both. Of that precipitate scene of passion & crime Fitzpiers had known nothing till he saw an account of it in the papers, where, fortunately for himself, no mention was made of his prior acquaintance with the unhappy lady; nor was any allusion made to him in the subsequent inquiry, there the double death being attributed to some gambling losses, though in point of fact neither one of them had visited the tables. ~~On the occasion~~ ~~to which we refer~~ ~~Mr Melbury~~ When Melbury & his daughter drew near their home stead began to emerge

house, & when the roofs & chimneys of the ~~dwelling were opened~~ into view from the screen of boughs, Grace started, & checked herself in her abstracted advance.

"You clearly understand," she said to her step-mother, some of her old misgiving returning, "that I am coming back only on condition of his leaving as he promised. Will you let him know this, that there may be no mistake?"

Mrs Melbury, who had had some long private talks with Fitzpiers, assured Grace that she need have no doubts on that point, & that he would probably be gone by the evening. Grace then entered with them into Melbury's wing of the house, & sat down listlessly in the parlour while her step-mother went to Fitzpiers.

The prompt obedience with which the surgeon complied did honour to

him, if anything could. Before Mrs Melbury had returned to the room Grace, who was sitting in the parlour window-bench, saw her husband go from the door under the increasing light of morning, with a bag in his hand. ~~Before~~ While passing through the gate he turned his head. The firelight of the room she sat in threw her figure into dark relief against the window as she looked ~~out~~ through the panes, & he must have seen her distinctly. In a moment he went on, ~~passed through~~ the gate fell to, & he disappeared. At the hut she had declared that ~~she~~ another had ~~shamed~~ displaced him; & now she had banished him.

Chapter XLIV.

Mr. Fitzpiers had hardly been gone an hour when Grace began to sicken. The next day she kept her room. Old Jones was called in: he murmured some statements in which the words "feverish symptoms" occurred. Grace heard them, & guessed the means by which she had brought this visitation upon herself.

One day while she still lay there with her head ~~beat~~ throbbing, & wondering if she were really going to join him who had gone before, Grammer Oliver came to her bedside. "I don't know who's this is meant for you to take Ma'am," she said. "But I have found it on the table. It was left by Marty, I think, when she came yester this morning."

Grace turned her hot eyes upon what Grammer held up. It was the phial, left at the hut by her husband when he had begged her

to take some drops of its contents if she wished to preserve herself from falling a victim to the malady which had pulled down Mr Winterborne She examined it as well as she could. The liquid it was of an opaline hue, & bore a label with an inscription in Italian. He had probably got it in his wanderings abroad. She knew but little Italian, but could understand that the cordial was a ~~for~~ febrifuge of some sort. Her father, & her mother, & all the household were anxious for her recovery, & she resolved to obey her husband's directions. Whatever the risk, if any, she was prepared to run it. A glass of water was brought & the drops dropped in.

The effect, though not miraculous, was remarkable. In less than an hour, she felt calmer, cooler better able to reflect, less inclined to fret & chafe & wear herself away. She took a few drops more. From that time the fever retreated & went out like a damped conflagration.

"How clever he is!" she said regretfully. "Why could he not have had more principle so as to turn his great talents to good account! Perhaps he had saved my useless life. But he does not know it, & does not care whether he has saved it or not; & will never be told by me. Probably on that account he only saved it to me in the arrogance of his skill, to show the greatness of his resources, as Elijah drew down fire from Heaven." ~~beside mine~~

~~knowledge & prove himself a ruler over disease.~~

As soon as she had quite recovered from this foiled attack upon her life she went to Marty South's cottage. The current of her being had again set towards the lost Giles Winterborne.

"Marty" she said, "we both loved him. We will go to his grave together."

Great Hintock church stood at the upper part of the village, & could be reached without passing through the street. In the dusk of the late September day they went thither (by devious, secret ways,) walking mostly in silence side by side, each busied with her own thoughts. Grace had a trouble exceeding Marty's, that haunting sense of having put out the light of his life by her own hasty doings. She had tried to persuade herself that he might have died of his illness even if she had not ~~gone to him~~ taken possession of his house. Sometimes she succeeded in her attempt; sometimes she did not.

They stood by the grave together, & though the sun had gone down they could see over the woodlands for miles & down to the vale in which he had

~~choppings, devious ways, ruts, yellow and red mottle~~

with his portable mill & press
been accustomed to descend every year to make cider about this time.

Perhaps Grace's first grief, the discovery that she could never claim
if he had lived have
her, had some power in softening ~~the~~ this, the second, ~~his loss~~ On Marty's part
there was the same consideration; never would she have been his.
~~How~~ As no anticipation of gratified affection had been in existence
while he was with them
there was none to be disappointed now that he had gone.
~~after all~~ [Grace was abased when by degrees she found that she had
never understood Giles as Marty had done. Marty South alone, of
all the women in Hintock & the world, had approximated to Winter-
borne's level of intelligent intercourse with nature. In that respect she
had ~~been~~ the former complement to him in the other sex, had lived as his counterpart,
had subjoined her thoughts to his as a corollary.

The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that
wondrous ~~world~~ world of sap & leaves called the Hintock woods had been
Giles & Marty, had been opened of its finer
with these two, a clear gaze. They ~~knew~~ mysteries as of common-
place knowledge; had been able to read its hieroglyphics as ordinary
writing; to them the sights & sounds of night, winter, wind, tempest, storm,
amid those dense boughs, which had to Grace a touch of the uncanny,
even the
of supernatural, were simple occurrences whose origin, continuance, & laws.
They ~~could pronounce upon~~ forekenew. They had planted together, & together they had
felled; together they had, with the run of the years, mentally collected
those remoter
~~the~~ signs & symbols which seen in few were of runic obscurity,
but all together made an alphabet. From the ~~touch of a fabling~~
~~least touches of the~~
light lashing of the

"Is he in great danger — can you cure him?" she cried.

twigs upon their faces when brushing through them in the dark they could pronounce upon the species of the tree whence they stretched; from the quality of the wind's murmur through a bough they could in like manner name its sort after off. They knew by a glance at a trunk if its heart were sound or tainted with incipient decay, & by the state of its upper twigs the stratum that had been reached by its roots. The auspices of the seasons were seen by them from the conjurer's own point of view, & not from that of the spectators.

"He ought to have married you, Marty, & nobody else in the world!" said Grace with conviction, ~~when~~ after thinking somewhat in the above strain.

Marty shook her head. "In all our outdoor days & years together, ma'am," she replied, "the one ~~thing~~ ~~and~~ he never spoke ~~of~~ to me was love; nor I to him."

"~~But~~ Yet you & he could speak in ~~a tongue~~ ..... that nobody else knew — not even my father, though he came nearest knowing — the tongue of the trees & fruits & flowers themselves, ~~almost~~."

She could indulge in mournful fancies like this to Marty; but the hard core to her grief — which Marty's had not — remained. Had she been sure that Giles's death resulted entirely from his exposure it would have driven her well-nigh to insanity, but there was always that bare possibility that his exposure had only precipitated what was inevitable. She longed to believe that it had not done even this.

There was only one man whose
~~Only one man could express an~~ opinion on the circumstances, ~~which~~ she

would be at all disposed to trust. Her husband was that man. Yet to ask him it would be necessary to detail the true conditions in which she & Sutterborne had lived during these three or four critical days that followed her flight; & in withdrawing her original defiant ~~statement~~ announcement on that point there seemed a weakness she did not care to show. She never doubted that Fitzpiers would believe her if she made a clean confession of the actual situation; but to volunteer the ~~statement~~ correction would seem like signalling for a truce, & that in her present frame of mind was what she did not feel the the need of.

[White line] It will probably not ~~seem~~ appear a surprising statement, after what has been already declared of Fitzpiers, that the man whom fidelity could not keep faithful was stung into a passionate ~~frame~~ throb of interest & concerning Grace's her by her avowal of the contrary.

That He had never known her dangerously full compass if she were capable of such a reprisal [He declared to himself]; & melancholy as it may be to admit the fact, his our humiliation & regret engendered a ~~momentary~~ smouldering admiration of her.

He passed a ~~day~~ week or two of great misery at ~~Shenton~~ Exbury, the place to which he had retired — quite as much misery indeed as Grace, could she have known of it, would have been inclined to inflict upon any living creature, however much he might have wronged her. Then a sudden hope dawned upon him; he wondered if her ~~statement~~ affirmation were true. He asked himself whether it were not the act of a woman whose natural purity & innocence had

blinded her to the contingencies of such ~~a statement~~ an announcement. His wide experience of the sex had taught him that, in many cases, women who ventured on hazardous matters did so because they lacked an imagination sensuous enough to feel their full force. In this light Grace's bold avowal might merely have denoted the desperation of one who was a child to the realities of obliquity.

Fitzpiers's mental sufferings & suspense led him at last to take a melancholy journey to the neighbourhood of Little Hintock; & here he hovered, for hours around the scene of the purest emotional experiences that he had ever known in his life. He walked about the woods that surrounded Melbury's house, keeping out of sight like a criminal. It was a fine evening night, & on his way homeward he passed near Marty South's cottage. As usual she had lighted her candle without closing her shutters; & he saw her within as he had seen her many times before.

She was polishing tools, & though he had not wished to show himself he could not resist speaking into her through the half-open door, "What are you doing that for, Marty?"

"Because I want to clean them. They are not mine." He could see indeed that they were not hers, for one was a spade, large & heavy, & another was a bill-hook which she could only have used with both hands. The spade though not a new one had been so completely burnished that it was bright as silver.

Fitzpiers somehow divined that they were Giles Winterborne's, & he put the question to her.

~~#109~~

~~the lattice; the [illegible]; the [illegible] safe.~~

~~She had not seen a soul all the day.~~

She replied in the affirmative. "I am going to keep 'em," she said, "but I can't get his apple-cider & press mill, I wish I could; it is going to be cold, they say."

"Then I will buy it for you," said Fitzpiers. "That will be making you a return for a kindness you did me." His glance fell upon the girl's rare-coloured hair, wh. had grown again. "Marty — that letter!... But it was a kindness to send it, nevertheless," he added musingly. those locks of yours — &

After this there was confidence between them — such confidence indeed as there had never been before. Marty was shy, indeed, of speaking about the letter, & her motives in writing it; but she thanked him warmly for his promise of the cider-press. She would travel with it in the autumn season, as he had done, she said. She would be quite strong enough, with old Creedle as an assistant.

"Ah — there was one nearer to him than you," said Fitzpiers, referring to Winterborne. "One who lived where he lived, & was with him when he died."

Then Marty, suspecting that he did not know the true circumstances, from the fact that Mrs Fitzpiers & himself were living apart, told him of Giles's generosity & grace in giving up his house to her, at the risk, & probably the sacrifice, of his own life. When the surgeon heard it he almost envied Giles his elevations of character, & went home thoughtful, feeling that in more than one sense his journey to Marty Hintock had not been in vain. He expressed a wish to Marty that his visit to her should be kept secret,

He would have given much to win Grace's forgiveness then. But whatever he dared hope for in that kind from the future, there was nothing to be done yet, while Giles Winterborne's memory was green. To wait was imperative. "A little time might melt her frozen thoughts", & lead her to look on him with toleration, if not with love.

~~109~~

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Chapter XLV

Weeks & months of mourning for Wintertorne had been passed by Grace in the soothing monotony of the memorial act to which she and Mary had devoted themselves. Twice a week the pair went in the dusk to Great Hintock & like the two mourners in Cymbeline, sweetened his sad grave with their flowers & their tears. Sometimes Grace thought that it was a pity neither one of them had been his wife for a little while, & given the world a copy of him who was so valuable in their eyes. Nothing ever had brought home to her with such force as this death how little acquirements & culture weigh beside sterling personal character. While her simple sorrow for his loss took a softer edge with the lapse of the Autumn & winter season, her self reproach at having had a possible hand in causing it knew little abatement.

Little occurred at Hintock during these months of the fall & decay of the leaf. Discussion of ~~poor Felice~~ the almost contemporaneous death of Mrs Charmond abroad had waxed & waned. Fitzpiers had had a marvellous escape from being dragged into the enquiry which followed it, through the accident of their having parted just before under the influence of Marty South's letter — the tiny instrument of a cause deep in nature.

Her body was not brought home. It seemed to accord well with the fitful fever of that impassioned woman's life that she should not have found a native grave. ~~She had enjoyed but a~~ She had had but a life-interest in the

estate, of which after her death passed to a relative of her husbands – one who knew not Felice, one whose purpose seemed to blot out of every vestige of her.

On a certain day in February – the cheerful day of St Valentine in fact a letter reached Mrs Fitzpiers which had been mentally promised her for that particular day a long time before.

It announced that Fitzpiers was living at some midland town where he had obtained a temporary practice as assistant to some local medical man whose curative principles were all wrong, though he dared not set them right. He had thought fit to communicate with her on that day of tender traditions to inquire if, in the event of his obtaining a substantial practice that which he had in view elsewhere, she could forget the past & bring herself to join him. [Here the practical part ended: he then went on: –

My last year of experience has added ten years to my age, dear Grace, & dearest wife that ever erring man undervalued. You may be absolutely indifferent to what I say, but let me say it, I have never loved any woman alive or dead as I love, respect, & honour you at this present moment. What you told me in the pride & naughtiness of your heart I never believed [this by the way was not strictly true]; but even if I had believed it, it could never have estranged me from you. Is there any use in telling you – no, there is not – that I dream of your ripe lips more frequently than I say my prayers: that the old familiar rustle of your dress often returns upon my mind

till it distracts me. If you could condescend even only to see me again you would be breathing life into a corpse. My pure, pure Grace, modest as a turtle-dove, how came I ever to possess you? For the sake of being present in your mind on this lovers' day I think I would almost rather have you hate me a little than not think of me at all. You may ~~think~~ call my fancies whimsical; but remember, sweet lost one, that "nature is fine in love, & where 'tis fine it sends some instance of itself".—I will not intrude upon you further now. Make me a little bit happy by sending back one line to say that you will consent at any rate to a short interview. I will meet you & leave you as a mere acquaintance, if you will only afford me this slight means of making a few explanations, & of putting my position before you. Believe me, in spite of all you may do or feel,

"Your lover always, (once your husband)

"E." Effie

It was oddly enough, the first occasion, or nearly the first on which Grace had ever received a love-letter from him, his courtship having taken place under conditions which rendered letter-writing unnecessary. Its perusal, therefore, had a certain novelty for her. ~~But the chief~~ She thought not, upon the whole, he wrote love-letters very well. But the chief rational interest of the letter to the reflective Grace lay in the chance that such a meeting as he proposed would afford her of setting her doubts at rest one way or the other on her actual share in Winterborne's death. The relief of consulting a skilled mind,

the one professional man who had seen Giles at that time, would be immense. As for ~~her~~ that statement that she had ~~utterance~~ uttered in her disdainful grief, which at the time she had regarded as her triumph, she was quite prepared to admit to him that his belief was the true one; for in wronging herself as she did when she made it she had done what to her was a far more serious thing, wronged Winterborne's memory.

Without consulting her father, or anyone in the house or out of it, Grace replied to the letter. She agreed to meet Fitzpiers on two conditions, of which the first was that the place of meeting should be on the top of Rubdown Hill, the second that he would not object to Marty South accompanying her.

Whatever art, much or little, there may have been in Fitzpiers's so-called valentine to his wife, he felt a delight as of the bursting of Spring when her brief reply came. It was one of the few ~~keen~~ pleasures that he had experienced of late years at all resembling those of his early youth. He promptly replied that he accepted the conditions, & named the day & hour at which he would be on the spot she mentioned.

A few minutes before three on the appointed day found him climbing the well-known hill, which had been the ~~scene~~ axis of so many critical movements in their lives during his residence at Hintock

Chapter XLV (continued.)

The sight of each homely & well-remembered object swelled the regret that seldom left him now. Whatever paths might lie open to his future, the soothing shades of Hintock were forbidden him for ever as a permanent dwelling-place.

He longed for the society of Grace. But to lay offerings on her slighted ~~yet he shrunk to propitiate~~ altars was his first aim, & until her propitiation was complete he would constrain her ~~exercise~~ in no ~~kind of pressure~~ way to return to him. The least reparation that he could make, in a case where he would gladly have made most, would be to let her feel freely absolutely free to choose between living with him and without him.

Moreover, a subtlist in emotions, he cultivated as under glasses strange & monstrous pleasures that he would not willingly let die just at present. To show any forwardness in suggesting a modus vivendi to Grace would be to put an end to these novelties. To be the vessel of her sweet will for a time — he demanded no more, & found solace in the contemplation of the soft miseries she caused him.

Approaching the hill-top with a mind strung to ~~& expectancies~~ gay he perhaps discerned a procession of people coming over the crest, & was not long in perceiving them to be a wedding-party. Though the wind was keen the women were in light attire, & the flowered waistcoats of the men had a pleasing vividness of pattern. Each of the gentler ones

clung to the arm of her partner so tightly as to have with him one step, rise, swing, gait, almost one centre of gravity. In the buxom bride Fitzpiers recognised no other than Suke Damson, who in her light-green looked like a grasshopper; the small husband beside her, he said then, Jim Yeo.

Fitzpiers could not escape, for they had seen him; though of all the beauties in the world whom he did not wish to meet that day Suke was the chief. But he put the best face on the matter that he could, & came on, the approaching company evidently discussing him, & his separation from Mrs Fitzpiers. As the couples passed closed upon him he expressed his congratulations.

"We be just walking round the parish as to show ourselves a bit," said Jim. "First we het across to Delborough, then afterard to here, & from here we go to Rud-down & Millshot, & then round by the cross-roads home. Home says I, but it won't be that long. We be off next month."

"Indeed. Where to?"

Jim informed him that they were going to New Zealand. Not but that he would have been contented with Hintock, but his wife was ambitious & wanted to leave; so he had given way.

"Then good-bye," said Fitzpiers. "I may not see you again. He shook hands with Jim & turned to the bride "Good-bye, Suke," he said taking her hand also. "I wish you & your husband prosperity in the country you have chosen." With this he left them, & hastened on to his appointment.

The wedding-party re-formed & resumed likewise march. But in restoring his arm to Luke Jim noticed that her full blooming countenance had undergone a change. "Hullo, me dear — what's the matter?" said Jim.

"Nothing to speak o'," said she. In spite of her assertion she was seized with lachrymose twitches, that soon produced a dribbling face.

"How — what — the devil's this about!" he exclaimed the bridegroom.

"She's a little wee bit overcome," said the first bridesmaid, unfolding her handkerchief & wiping Luke's eyes.

"I never did like parting from people!" said Luke as soon as she could speak.

"Why Jim in particular?"

"Well — he's such a clever doctor that 'tis a thousand pities we shan't see him any more! There'll be no such clever doctor as he in New Zealand, if I should require one; & he thought o't got the better of my feelings!"

They walked on, & Jim's face grew rigid & pale, for he recalled slight circumstances, disregarded at the time of their occurrence. The former boisterous laughter of the wedding-party at the groomsman's jokes was heard ringing through the woods no more.

By this time Fitzpiers had advanced on his way to the top of the hill, where he saw two figures emerge from the bank on the right hand. These were the expected one Grace, & Marty South, who had evidently come there by a short & secret path through the wood. Grace was muffled up in her winter dress, & he thought that she had never looked so seductive as at this moment, in the moonlight

bright but heatless sun, & the keen wind, & the purplish-grey masses of brushwood around. Fitzpiers continued to regard the nearing picture, till at length their glances met for a moment, when she demurely sent off hers at a tangent & gave him the benefit of her three-quarter face, while with chivalrous completeness of conduct he lifted his hat in a large arc. Marty dropped behind, & when Fitzpiers held out his hand Grace touched it with her fingers.

"I have agreed to be here mostly because I wanted to ask you something important," said Mrs Fitzpiers, her intonation modulating in a direction that had not quite wished it to take.

wood for privacy?"

"I am most attentive," said her husband. "Shall we take to the wood,

Grace demurred; & Fitzpiers gave in, & they kept the public road.

At any rate she would take his arm? This also was gravely negatived, the repusal being audible to Marty, who looked amused.

"Why not?" he inquired.

"Oh Mr Fitzpiers – how can you ask!"

"Right, right," said he, his effusiveness shrivelling up.

As they walked on she returned to her inquiry. "It is about a matter that observing a group of starlings feeding in the grass, she continued that may perhaps be unpleasant to you. But I think I need not consider that too carefully."

"Not at all," said Fitzpiers heroically.

She then took him back to the time of poor Winterborne's death, and

related the precise circumstances amid which his fatal illness had come upon him, particularizing the dampness of the shelter to which he had betaken himself, his concealment from her of the hardships he was undergoing, all that he had put up with, all that he had done for her in his scrupulous considerateness. The retrospect brought her to tears by the time she was at leave as she asked him if he thought that the sin of having driven him to his death was upon her.

Mr Spiers could hardly help showing his satisfaction at what her naiveté indirectly revealed, the actual harmlessness of an escapade with her lover which had at first, by her own showing, looked so grave, & he did not care to inquire whether that harmlessness had been the result of aim or of accident. With regard to her question, he declared that in his judgment no human being could answer it. He thought that upon the whole the balance of probabilities turned in her favour. Winterborne's apparent strength, during the last months of his life, must have been delusive. It had often occurred that after a first attack of that insidious disease a person's so-called recovery was a physiological mendacity.

The relief which came to Grace almost as much in sharing her knowledge of the particulars with an intelligent mind as in the assurances Mr Spiers had given her. "Well then, I have put this case before you, & obtained your professional opinion, was chiefly why I consented to come here to-day", said she, when he had reached the aforesaid conclusion.

"For no other reason at all?" he asked quietly.

"It was nearly the whole."

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They stood & looked over a gate at twenty or thirty starlings feeding in the grass, & he started the talk again by saying in a low voice "And yet I love you more than ever I loved you in my life".

Grace did not remove her eyes from the birds, & folded her delicate lips as if to keep them in subjection.

"It is a different kind of love altogether," said he. "Less passionate; more profound. It has nothing to do with the material conditions of the object at all; much to do with her character & goodness, as revealed by closer intimacy & observation. 'Love talks with better knowledge, & knowledge with dearer love.'"

"That's out of 'Measure for Measure', said the stiff.

Oh yes – I meant it as a quotation" blandly replied Fitzpiers. "Well then, why not give me a very little bit of your heart again?"

The crash of a felled tree in the remote depths of the wood recalled the past at that moment, & all the homely faithfulness of Winterborne. "Don't ask it. "My heart is in the grave with Giles" she replied staunchly.

"Mine is with you – in no less deep a grave I fear, according to that".

"I am very sorry; but it cannot be helped."

"How can you be sorry for me, when you wilfully keep open the grave?"

"Oh no – that's not so," returned Grace quickly; & moved to go away from him.

"But dearest Grace!" said he. "You have condescended to come; & I thought from it that perhaps when I had passed through a long state of probation & you would be generous. But if there can be no hope of our getting completely

reconciled that me guilty – wretch though I am."

"I did not say you were a wretch, nor have I ever said so."

"But you have had a contemptuous way of looking at me that I fear you think so."

Grace's heart struggled violently between the wish not to be harsh & the fear that she might mislead him. "I cannot look contemptuous unless I feel contempt," she said uneasily. "And all I feel is ~~a want of~~ loveliness."

"I have been very bad I know," he returned. "But unless you can really love me again, Grace, I would rather go away from you for ever. I don't want you to become mine again for duty's sake, or anything of that sort. If I had not cared more for your affection & forgiveness than my own personal comfort I should never have come back here. I could have obtained a practice at a distance, & have lived my own life without coldness or reproach. But I have chosen to return to the one spot on earth where my name is tarnished – to enter the house of a man from whom I have had worse treatment than from any other man alive. All for you."

This was undeniably true, & it had its weight with Grace, who began to look as if she thought she had been shockingly severe.

"Before you go," he continued, "I want to know your pleasure about me: what you wish me to do, or not to do."

"You are independent of me, & it seems a mockery to ask that," she said. "Far be it from me to advise. But I will think it over. I rather need advice myself than stand in a position to give it."

"You don't need advice (dearest innocent) woman that ever lived. If you did ——"

"Would you give it to me?"

"Would you act upon what I gave?"

"That's not a fair inquiry" said she smiling despite herself. "I don't mind hearing it — what you do really think the most correct & proper course for me."

"It is the case for me to say, & yet I dare not, for it would be provoking you to remonstrances."

Knowing of course what the advice would be, she did not press him further; & was about to beckon Mary forward & leave him, when he interrupted her with "O one moment dear Grace — you will meet me again?" She eventually agreed to see him that day fortnight. He postulated at the interval, but the half-alarmed earnestness with which she entreated him not to come sooner made him say hastily that he submitted to her will, dictum — that he would regard her as a friend only, anxious for his reform & well-being, till such time as she might allow him to exceed that privilege. All this was to assure her: it was only too clear that he had not won her confidence yet. It amazed F. & overthrew all his deductions from previous experience, to find that this girl, though she had been married to him, could yet be so coy. Notwithstanding a certain fascination that it carried with it, his reflections were somber as he went homeward; he saw how deep had been his offence to produce so great a wariness in a gentle & once unsuspicious soul.

He was himself too fastidious to care to coerce her. To be an object of misgiving, or dislike to a woman who shared his home was what he could not endure the thought of. Life as it stood was more tolerable. When he was gone Marty joined Mrs Fitzpiers. She would fain have consulted Marty on the question of platonic relations with her former husband, as she preferred to regard him. But Marty showed no great interest in their affairs, so Grace said nothing. Whereupon, when they came onward, and they saw Melbury standing at the scene of the felling which had been audible between them, when telling Marty that she wished her meeting with Mr Fitzpiers to be kept private, she left the girl to join her father. At any rate she would consult him on the expediency of occasionally meeting her husband.

Her father was cheerful, & walked by her side as he had done in earlier days. "I was thinking of you when you came up," he said. "I have considered that what has happened is for the best. Since your husband is gone away & seems not to wish to trouble you, why, let him go, & drop out of your life. Many women are worse off. You can live here comfortably enough, & he can emigrate, or do what he likes for his good. I would nt mind sending him the further sum of money he might naturally expect to come to him, so that you may not be bothered with him any more..... He could hardly have gone or living here, without speaking to me, or meeting me; & that would have been very unpleasant

on both sides." These remarks checked her intention. There was a sense of weakness in following them by ~~telling~~ saying him that she had just met her husband by appointment "Then you would advise me not to communicate with him?" she observed.

"I shall never advise ye again. You are your own mistress—do as you like. But my opinion is that if you dont live with him, you had better live without him, & not go shilly-shallying & playing bo-peep. You sent him away: & now he's gone. Very well; trouble him no more."

Grace felt a guiltiness – she hardly knew why – & made no confession.

Chapter XLVI

The woods were uninteresting, & Grace stayed indoors a great deal. She became ~~she had become~~ quite a student, reading ~~& read~~ more than she had done since her marriage. But her seclusion was always broken for the ~~&~~ periodical visit to Winterborne's grave with Marty, which was kept up with pious strictness for the purpose of putting snowdrops, primroses, & other vernal flowers thereon as they came.

~~But~~ One afternoon at sunset she was standing just outside her father's garden, which like the rest of the Hintock enclosures abutted into the wood. A slight footpath led along here, forming a secret way to either of the houses by getting through its boundary ~~the garden~~ hedge. Grace was just about to enter ~~adopt~~ this mode of entry when a figure appeared ~~noticed along~~ approached along the path & held up his hand to detain her. It was her husband.

"I am delighted," he said ~~breathlessly, as he came up~~ coming up out of breath; & there seemed no reason to doubt his words. "I saw you come way off — I was afraid you would go in before I could reach you."

"It is a week before the time," said she reproachfully. "I said a fortnight from the last meeting".

"My dear, you don't suppose I could wait a fortnight without trying to get a glimpse of you, even though you had declined to meet me! Would it make you angry to know that I have been along this path at dusk three or four times since our last meeting? Well, how are you?" [She did not refuse her hand, but when he showed a wish to retain it a moment longer than the mere formality required she made it small- er & so that it slipped it away from him, with again that same alarmed look which always followed his attempts in this direction. He saw that she was not yet out of the elusive mood; not yet to be treated presumingly; she was correspondingly careful to tranquillize her.

His assertion had seemed to impress her somewhat. "I had no idea you came so often," she said. "How far do you come from?"

"From Exbury. I always walk from Shorton-Abbas, for if I hire people will know that I come; & my success with you so far has not been great enough to justify such overtures. Now, my dear one — as I must call you — I put it to you: will you see me a little oftener as the spring advances?"

Grace lapsed into unwonted sedateness, & avoiding the question said, "I wish you would concentrate on your profession, & give up those strange studies that used to distract you so much. I am glad you worked get on."

"It is the very thing I am doing. I was going to ask you to burn – or at least get rid of – all my philosophical superfluous literature. It is in the bookcases in your rooms. The fact is I never cared much for abstruse studies."

"I am so glad to hear you say that. And those dreadful books those piles of old plays – what good are they to a medical man?"

"None whatever!" he replied cheerfully. "Sell them at Sherton for what they will fetch."

"And those dreadful old French romances with their horrid spellings of 'filz' & 'ung' & 'ilz' & 'mary' & 'ma foy'."

"You haven't been reading them, Grace?"

"Oh no – I just looked into them, that was all."

"Bless me! Make a bonfire of 'em directly you get home. I meant to do it myself. I can't imagine what possessed me ever to collect them. I have only a few professional handbooks now, & am quite a practical man. I am in hopes of having some good news to tell you soon, & then if do you think you could – come to me again?"

"I would rather that you did not press me on that just now,"

she replied with some agitation. "You have said you mean to lead a new, useful, effectual practical life; but I should like to see you put it in practice for a little while before you address that query to me. Besides — I could not live with you."

"Why not?"

Grace was silent a few instants. "I go with Marty to Giles's grave. We swore we would show him that devotion. And I mean to keep it up."

"Well — I wouldn't mind that at all. I have no right to expect anything else, & I will not wish you to keep away. I liked the man as well as any I ever knew. In short I would accompany you as far as, say, a hundred yards of the place, & smoke a cigar on the stile while I waited for you till you came back —"

"Then you haven't given up smoking?"

"Well — ahem — no. I have thought of doing so, but —"

His extreme complaisance had rather disconcerted Grace, & the question about smoking had been to effect a diversion. Presently she said sadly, & with a moisture in her eye that he could not see, as her mind returned to poor Giles's "frustrate ghost"; "I don't like you — to speak lightly on that subject, if you did speak lightly. To be frank with you — quite frank — I think of him as my betrothed a lover still. I cannot help it. So that it would be wrong for me to join you."

Fitzpiers was now uneasy. "You say your betrothed a lover still," he rejoined. "When then were you betrothed, to him, or engaged, as we common people say?"

"When you were away."

"How could that be?"

Grace would have avoided this; but her natural candour led her on. "It was when I was under the impression that my marriage with you was about to be annulled, & that he could then marry me. So I encouraged him."

Felspiers winced visibly at this; & yet upon the whole she was right in telling it. Indeed, ~~it was~~ his perception that she was right in her absolute sincerity kept up his affectionate admiration for her under the pain of the rebuff. Time had been when the avowal that Grace had deliberately taken steps to replace him would have brought him no sorrow. But she so far dominated him now that he could not bear to hear her words, although the object of her high regard was no more.

"It is rough upon me — that!" he said bitterly. "O Grace — I did not know you — tried to get rid of me! I suppose it is of no use, but I ask, cannot you hope to — find a little love in your heart for me again?"

"If I could I would oblige you; but I fear I cannot!" she replied with illogical unfulness. "And I don't see why you should mind my having had one lover besides yourself in my life when you have had so many."

"But I can tell you honestly that I love you better than all of them put together, & that's what you will not tell me."

"I am sorry; but I fear I cannot," she said sighing again.

"I wonder if you ever will!" He looked musingly into her indistinct face as if he would read the future there. "Now have pity, & tell me: will you try?"

"To love you again?"

"Yes, if you can."

"I don't know how to reply," she answered, proving her truth. her embarrassment. "Will you promise to leave me quite free as to seeing you or not seeing you?"

"Certainly. Have I given any ground for you to doubt my first promise in that respect?"

She was obliged to admit that he had not. ~~I'll try to think of you more~~

"Then I think you might get your heart out of that grave room," said he with playful sadness. "It has been there a long time."

She faintly shook her head, but said, "I'll try to think of you more, if I can."

With this Fitzpiers was compelled to be satisfied, & he asked her when she would meet him again.

"As we arranged – in a fortnight."

"If it must be a fortnight it must!"

"This time at least. I'll consider when by the day I see you again if I can shorten the interval."

"Well, be that as it may, I shall come at least twice a week to look at your window."

"You must do as you like about that. Good-night."

"Say 'husband'."

She seemed almost inclined to give him the words; but exclaiming "No, no – I cannot!" slipped through the garden-hedge & disappeared.

[White line] Fitzpiers did not desperate when he told her that he should haunt the precincts of her dwelling. But his persistence in this course did not result in his seeing her much oftener than at the fort-

nightly interval which she had keenly marked out as proper. At these times, however, she punctually appeared, & as the spring wore on the meetings ~~husband & wife~~ were kept up, though their character changed but little, with the increase in their number.

The small garden of the cottage occupied by the Tangs family — father, son, & now son's wife — aligned with the larger one of the timber-dealer at its upper end; & when young Jim, after leaving work at Melbury's, stood at dusk in the little bower at the corner of his enclosure to smoke a pipe, he frequently observed the lurcher pass along the outside track before-mentioned. Fitzpiers always walked loiteringly, pensively, looking with a sharp eye into the gardens one after another as he proceeded; for Fitzpiers did not wish to leave the now entwining ~~beloved~~ absorbing spot too quickly, after travelling so far to reach it, hoping always for a glimpse of her whom he passionately desired to take to his arms anew.

Now Jim began to be struck with these loitering progresses along the garden boundaries in the gloaming, & wondered what they boded. It was, namely, quite out of his power to divine the singular, sentimental revival in Fitzpiers's heart: the fineness of tissue which could take a ~~both~~ deep ~~an~~ emotional — almost also — ~~& an~~ artistic pleasure in being. the yearning he ~~was~~ enamorato of a woman he once had deserted, ~~was~~ under would have seemed an absurdity to the young sawyer. Mr & Mrs Fitzpiers were separated; therefore the question of attachment as between them was settled. But this Suke had, since that

meeting on their marriage-day, repentantly admitted a good deal to the urgency of his questionings concerning her past levities. Putting all things together he could hardly avoid connecting Felispeir's mysterious visits with this spot with Luke's residence under his roof. But he made himself fairly easy: the vessel in which they were about to emigrate sailed that month; & then Luke would be out of Felispeir's way for ever.

The internal clock expired, & the eve of their departure arrived. They were pausing in the room of the cottage allotted to them by Jim's father, after a last busy day of preparation which left them weary. In a corner stood their boxes, crammed & corded, their large case for the hold having already been sent away. The firelight shone upon Luke's fine face & form as she stood looking into it, & upon Jim's the face of Jim seated in a corner, & upon the walls of his father's house, which he was beholding that night almost for the last time.

Jim Jangs was not happy. This scheme of emigration was dividing him from his father — for old Jangs would on no account leave Hintock — and had it not been for Luke's reputation & his own dignity Jim would at the last moment have abandoned the project. As he sat in the back part of the room he regarded her warmly, & the fire, & the boxes. One thing he had particularly noticed this evening — she was very restless; restless in her actions, unable to remain seated, & in a marked degree depressed.

"Sorry that you be going, after all, Luke?" he said.

She sighed involuntarily. "I don't know but that I be," she answered. "'Tis natural, isn't it, when one is going away?"

"But you wasn't born here as I was."

"No."

"There's folk left behind that you'd fain have with 'ee, I reckon."

"Why do ye think that?

"I've seen things, & I've heard things; & Luke, I say 'twill be a good move for me to get 'ee away.... I don't mind his leavings abroad, but I do mind 'em at home."

Luke's face ~~did~~ was not changed from its aspect of listless indifference at by the words. She answered nothing; & shortly after he went out for his customary pipe of tobacco at the top of the garden.

The restlessness of Luke had indeed owed its presence to the gentleman of Sue's suspicions, but in a different — & it must be added in justice wiser — more innocent sense than he supposed, judging from former doings. She had accidentally discovered that Pitt Jupiter was in the habit of coming secretly once or twice a week to Hintock, & knew that this evening was a favourite the one of the seven for his purpose journey. As she was going next day to leave the country Sue thought there could be no great harm in giving way to a little sentimentality by obtaining a glimpse of him quite unknown to himself or to anybody, & thus taking a silent last farewell. Aware that Pitt Jupiter's time for passing was at hand she thus betrayed her feeling. No sooner, therefore, had Tim left the room than she let lonely noise=

lessly out of the house, & hastened to the corner of the garden whence she could witness the mysterious transit across the scene – if he had not already gone by.

Her light cotton gown was visible to Jim ensconced in the arbour of the opposite corner, though he was hidden from her. He saw her stealthily climb into the hedge, & so ensconce herself that nobody could have the least doubt her purpose was to watch unseen for a passer by.

He went across to the spot & stood behind her. Suke started, having, in her blundering way, forgotten that he might be there near. She at once descended from the hedge.

"So he's coming to-night," said Jim laconically – "and me be and always anxious to see our dears."

"He *is* coming to-night," she replied with defiance. "And me *be* anxious for our dears."

"Then will ye step indoors, where your dear will soon jine 'ee? We're to mouster by half-past-three to-morrow, & if we don't get to bed by eight at latest our faces will be as long as clock-cases all day."

She hesitated for a minute, but contemptuously obeyed, going slowly down the [13] garden to the house, where he heard the door-latch click behind her.

Jim was incensed beyond measure. His marriage had so far been a total failure; a source of bitter regret; & the only course for improving his case, that of leaving the country, was a sorry, & possibly might not be a very effectual one. His domestic sky was likely to be overcast to the end of the day. Thus he brooded, & his resentment gathered force. He craved a means of striking one blow back at the cause of his cheerless plight

while he was still on the scene of his discomfiture. For some minutes no method suggested itself; & then he had an idea.

Coming to a sudden resolution he hastened along the garden, & entered the one attached to the next cottage, which had formerly been the dwelling of a gamekeeper. Jim descended the path at the back of the house, where only an old woman lived at present, & reaching the wall he stopped. Owing to the slope of the ground the roof-eaves of the linhay were here within touch, & he thrust his arm up under them, feeling about in the space on the top of the wall-plate.

"Ah – I thought my memory didn't deceive me!" he ~~exclaimed~~ chipped silently.

With some exertion he drew down a cobwebbed object curiously framed in iron; which clanked as he moved it. It was about three feet in length & half as wide. Jim contemplated it as well as he could in the dying light of day, & raked off the cobwebs with his hand.

"That will spoil his pretty shins for'n, I reckon!" he said.

It was a man-trap.

Chapter XLVII

Were the inventors of ~~infernal~~ automatic machines to be ranged according to the excellence of their ~~diabolical ingenuities~~ devices for producing lugubrious, artistic torture, the creator of the man-trap would occupy a very respectable, ~~even a high~~ if not a very high place.

It should rather, however, be said, the inventor of the particular form of man-trap of which this was a specimen found in the keeper's outhouse. For there were other shapes

& other sizes; instruments which, if placed in a row beside those of the present type disinterred by Jim, would have worn the secondary subordinate aspect of the bears, wild boars, or wolves in a travelling menagerie as compared with the leading lion or tigers. In short, though during many varieties had been in use from more centuries which we are accustomed to look back upon as the true & only of merry England — in the rural districts more especially — and onward down many ~~centuries had been in use down~~ to the first third decade of the nineteenth century, this model had borne the palm, & had been most usually followed when the ~~estates~~ richards & estates refitted ~~& renewed~~.

There had been the toothless variety devised by the softer-hearted (or those under the influence of their wives) landlords — quite contemptible in their clemency. The jaws of these resembled the jaws of an old woman in whom age time has left nothing but gums. There were also the intermediate or half-toothed matter sorts, patiently devised by the middle-natured squires, two inches of mercy, two inches of cruelty, two inches of mere nip, two inches of mercy, probe, & so on through the whole extent of the jaws. There were also, as a class apart, the bruisers, which did not lacerate the flesh, but only crushed the bone.

The sight of one of these gins when set produced a mind impression that it was endowed with life. It exhibited the combined aspects of a shark, a crocodile, & a scorpion. Each tooth was in the form of a tapering spine two & a quarter inches long, which when the jaws were closed stood in alternation from this side & from that. When they were open the two halves formed a complete circle over between two & three feet in diameter, the plate or

treading-place in the midst being about a foot square, while from beneath extended in opposite directions the bow of the apparatus, the pair of springs, each one being of a stiffness to render necessary a lever, or the whole weight of the body, when forcing it down

There were men at this time still living at Hintock who remembered when the gin & others like it were in use. Tim Tangs's great uncle had endured a night of six hours in this very trap, which lamed him for life. Once a keeper of Hintock woods set it on the track of a poacher, & afterwards coming back that way, forgetful of what he had done, walked into it himself. The wound brought on lock-jaw of which he died. This event occurred during the thirties, & by the year 1840, the use of such implements was well-nigh discontinued in the neighbourhood. But being made entirely of iron they by no means disappeared, & in almost every village one could be found in some nook or corner as readily as this was found by Tim. It had indeed been a fearful amusement of Tim & other Hintock lads — especially those who had a dim sense of becoming renowned poachers when they reached their prime — to drag out this trap from its hiding, set it, & throw it with billets of wood, which were penetrated by the teeth to the depth of near an inch.

As soon as he had examined the trap, & found that the hinges & springs were still perfect, he shouldered it without more ado, & returned with his burden to his own garden, passing on through the hedge & the path immediately without

outside
the boundary. Here by the help of a stout stake he set the trap & laid it carefully behind a bush while he went forward to reconnoitre. As has been stated, nobody passed this way for days together sometimes; but there was just a possibility that some other pedestrian than the one in request might arrive, & it behoved Jim to be careful as to the identity of his Victim.

Going about a hundred yards along the rising ground to the right, he reached ~~the~~ a ridge where a large & thick holly grew. Beyond this for some distance the wood was more open, & the course which Fitzpiers must pursue to reach the point ~~the spot~~ if he came to-night, was visible a long way forward.

For some time there was no sign of him, or of anybody. Then there shaped itself a spot out of the dim mid-distance, between the masses of brushwood on either hand; & d-enlarged, & Jim could hear the brushing of feet over the tufts of sour grass. The airy gait also revealed Fitzpiers even before ~~&~~ his exact outline could be seen.

Jim Tangs turned about, & ran down the opposite side of the hill, till he was again at the head of his own garden. It was the work of a few moments to drag out the man-trap very gently — that the plate might not be disturbed sufficiently to throw it — & space between a pair of young oaks which, rooted in contiguity, grew apart upward, forming a V-shaped opening between them; & being backed up by bushes, left this as the only course for a foot-passenger. Here he laid the trap

with the same gentleness of handling, locked the chain round one of the traces, & finally slid back the guard which was placed to keep the pin from accidentally catching the arms of the latter him who set it, or, to use the local & better word — "coiled" it. Having completed this Jim sprang through the adjoining hedge of his father's garden, ran down the path, & softly entered the house.

Obedient to his order, Suke had gone to bed, & as soon as she had bolted the door Jim unlaced & kicked off his boots at the foot of the stairs, & retired likewise, without lighting a candle. His object seemed to be to undress as soon as possible. Before however, he had completed the operation a long cry resounded without — penetrating, but indescribable.

"What's that?" said Suke, starting up in bed.

"Sounds as if somebody had caught a rabbit in his gin."

"O no," said she. "It was not a rabbit. 'Twas louder. Hark!"

"Do 'ee get to sleep!" said Jim. "How be you going to wake at four else?" half-past-three

She lay down & was silent. Jim stealthily opened the window & listened. Above the low harmonies melody produced by the instrumentation of the various species of tree around the premises ~~the~~ he could hear the twitching clanking of a chain from the spot whereon he had set the man-trap. But further human sound there was none.

Jim was puzzled. In this the battle of his project he had not calculated upon a cry; but if one, why not more? He soon ceased to essay an answer; for Hintock was dead to him already. In half-a-dozen hours to would

be out of its precincts for life, on his way to the antipodes. He closed the window, & lay down.

[White line.] The hour which had brought these movements of Jim to birth had meanwhile been operating actively elsewhere. Awaiting the minute of her appointment with her husband Grace Dilspiers deliberated on many things. Should she inform her father before going out that the arrangement of Henery & Edgar was not so complete as he had imagined, & deemed desirable for her happiness? If she did so she must in some measure become the apologist of her husband, & she was not prepared to go so far. As for him, he kept her in a mood of considerable gravity. He certainly had changed. He had always been gentle in his manner towards her. Could it be that she might make a true worthy husband yet? She had married him; there was no getting over that; & ought she any longer to keep him at a distance. His suave deference to her lightest whim on the question of his comings & goings, when as her lawful husband he might show a better independence, was a trait in his character as unexpected as it was engaging. If she had been his empress & he her thrall, he could not have exhibited a more sensitive care to avoid intruding upon her against her will.

Impelled by a remembrance she took down a prayer-book, & turned to the marriage-service. Reading it slowly through she became quite appalled at her recent offhandedness, when she rediscovered what awfully solemn promises she had made him at those chancel steps not so very long ago. She became lost in long ponderings on how far a person's

consciences might be bound by vows made without a full recognition of their force at the time. That particular sentence beginning "Whom God hath joined together," was a stagger for a gentle woman of strong devotional sentiments. She wondered whether God really did join them together. Before she had done deliberating the time of her day of event drew near, & she went out of the house about the moment that Jim Fangs entered his retired to his own.

The position of things at that critical juncture was briefly as follows. Two hundred yards to the right of the upper end of the Fangs's garden Fitzjames was still advancing, having now nearly reached the summit of the wood-clothed ridge, the path being the actual one which passed between the two young oaks. Thus far it was according to Jim's conjecture. But about two hundred yards to the left, or rather less, was arising a condition which he had not foreseen, the emergence of Grace as aforesaid from the upper corner of her father's garden, with the view of meeting Jim's intended victim. Midway between husband & wife was the diabolical trap, silent, still, open, ready.

Fitzjames's walk that night had been cheerful, for he was convinced that the slow & gentle method he had adopted was promising success. The very restraint that he was obliged to exercise upon himself, so as not to kill the delicate bud of returning confidence, fed his flame. He walked so much more rapidly than Grace that, if they continued advancing as they had begun, he would reach the trap a good half minute before she could reach the same spot. But here a new circumstance came in:

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to escape the unpleasantness of being watched or listened to by lurkers — naturally curious by reason of their strained relations — they had arranged that their meeting for to-night should be at the holm tree on the ridge aforesaid. So soon, accordingly, as Fitzpiers reached the tree he stood still to await her.

He had not paused under the prickly foliage more than two minutes when he thought that he heard a scream from the other side of the ridge. Fitzpiers wondered what it could be mean; but such wind as there was just now blew in an adverse direction, & this mood was light. He set down the cry as one of the superstitious pranks or frolicsome scrimmages between sweethearts that still survived in Hintock from old-English times; & waited on where he stood till ten minutes had passed. Feeling then a little uneasy his mind reverted to the scream; & he went forward over the summit & down the embowered incline; till he reached the pair of sister oaks with the narrow opening between them.

Fitzpiers stumbled & all but fell. Stretching down his hand to ascertain the obstruction it came in contact with a confused mass of silken drapery & ironwork, that conveyed absolutely no explanatory idea to his mind at all. It was but the work of a moment to strike a match; & then he saw a sight which congealed his blood.

The man-trap was thrown; & between its jaws was part of a woman's clothing — a patterned silk skirt — gripped with such violence that the

iron teeth had pierced through it-, skewering its tissue in a score of places. He immediately recognised the skirt as that of one of his wife's gowns — the gown that she had worn when she met him on the very last occasion.

Although he had never seen a man-trap before, Mr Jeffries could not help perceiving that this instrument was one, & the conception instantly flashed upon him that Grace had been caught, taken out mangled by some chance passer, & carried home, some of her clothes being left behind in the difficulty of getting her free. The shock of this conviction, striking into him upon the very summit of high hope, was so great that he cried out like one in corporeal agony, & in his misery bowed himself down to the ground.

Of all the degrees & qualities of punishment that Mr Jeffries had undergone since his sins against Grace first began, not any even approximated in intensity to this. "O my own - my darling - O cruel Heaven - it is too much this!" he cried, writhing & rocking himself over the heavy ~~remnants~~ accessories of her he deplored.

~~His~~ The voice of his distress was sufficiently loud to be audible to any one who might have been there to hear it; & one there was. Right & left of the tenor pass between the oaks were dense bushes; & now from behind these a female figure glided, whose appearance even in the gloom was (noticeably strange. Though graceful in outline)

She was in white up to the waist, & figured above. She was, in short, Grace his wife, lacking the portion of her dress which the gin retained.

"Don't be grieved about me – don't, dear Edgar!" she exclaimed, rushing up & bending over him "I am not hurt a bit! I was coming on to find you after I had released myself, but I heard footsteps, & I hid away, because I was without some of my clothing & I did not know who the person might be."

Fitzpiers had sprung to his feet, & his next act was no less unpremeditated by him than it was irresistible by her, & would have been so by any woman not of Amazonian strength. He clasped his arms completely round, pressed her to his breast, & kissed her passionately.

"You are not dead! – you are not hurt! thank God – thank God!" he said almost sobbing in his delight & relief from the horror of his apprehension. "Grace, my wife, my love, how is this – what has happened?"

"I was coming on to you," she said as distinctly as she could in the half-smothered state of her face against his. "I was trying to be as punctual as possible, & as I had started a minute late I ran along the path very swiftly – fortunately for myself. Just when I had passed between these trees I felt something clutch at my dress from behind with a noise, & the next moment I was pulled backwards by it, & fell to the ground. I screamed with terror – thinking it was a man lying down there to murder me – but the next moment I discovered it was iron, & that my clothes were caught in a trap. I pulled this way & that, but the thing would not let go, drag it as I would &

I did not know what to do. I did not want to alarm my father, or anybody, as I wished nobody to know of these meetings with you; so I could think of no other plan than slipping off my skirt, meaning to run on & tell you what a strange accident had happened to me. But when I had just freed myself by leaving the dress behind, I heard steps, & not being sure it was you I did not like to be seen in such a pickle so I hid away."

"It was only your speed that saved you! One or both of your legs would have been broken if you had come at ordinary walking pace.

"Of yours, if you had got here first!" said she, beginning to realize the whole ghastliness of the possibility. "O Edgar, there has been an Eye watching over us to-night, & we should be thankful indeed." He continued to press his face to hers. "You are mine, mine again now."

She gently owned that she ~~thought~~ supposed she was. "I heard what you said when you ~~thought~~ supposed I was injured," she went on shyly, "& I know that a man who could suffer as you were suffering must have a tender regard for me. But how does this awful thing come here?"

"I suppose it has something to do with poachers." Fitzpiers was still so shaken by the sense of her danger that he was obliged to sit awhile & it was not until Grace said, "If I could only get out my skirt nobody would know anything about it," that he bestirred himself.

By their united efforts, each standing on one of the springs of

the trap. They pressed them down sufficiently to insert across the jaws a billet which they dragged from a faggot near at hand: & it was then possible to extract the silk mouthful from the monster's bite, creased & pierced with many holes, but not torn. Fitzpiers assisted her to put it on again; & when her customary contours were thus restored they walked on together, Grace taking his arm, till he effected an improvement by clasping it round her waist.

The ice having been broken in this unexpected manner she made no further attempt at reserve. "I would ask you to come into the house," she said; "but my meeting with you have been kept secret from my father, & I should like to prepare him."

"Never mind, dearest. I could not very well have excepted the invitation. I shall never leave here again — as much for your sake as for mine. I have news to tell you on this very point, but my alarm had put it out of my head. I have bought a practice, or rather a partnership, in the Midlands, & I must go there in a week to take up permanent residence. My poor old great-aunt died about eight months ago, & left me enough to do this. I have taken a little furnished house for a time, till we can get one of our own."

He described the place, & the surroundings, & the view from the windows; & Grace became much interested. "But why are you not there now?" she said.

X so that it was as if they ~~were~~ were seated in a great ~~at the bottom of a~~ green vase.
which had moss for its bottom & leaf sides.

"Because I cannot tear myself away from here till I have your promise. Now, darling, you will accompany me there — will you not? To-night has settled that?"

Grace's trembling had gone off, & she did not say nay. They went on together.

It was an especially soft balmy evening for the time of year, which was just that transient period in the May month when beech trees have suddenly unfolded large limp young leaves of the softness of butterflies' wings. Boughs bearing such leaves hung low around, & completely enclosed them: the clouds having been packed in the west so as to retain the departing glare a long while, that evening. But suddenly the question of time occurred to them: it had seemed much earlier than it was. Thus, with the adventure, & the emotions consequent upon the reunion which that event had forced on, combined to render Grace oblivious of the direction of their desultory ramble, till she noticed they were in an encircled glade in the densest part of the wood, that had imperceptibly added its rays to the scene, upon which the moon shone into almost vertically, down into a green vase. Here they sat down.

"I must go back!" she said; & without further delay they set their faces towards Stintock. As they walked he examined his watch by the aid of the now strong moonlight.

"By the gods I have lost my train!" said Fitzpiers.

"Dear me — where about are we?" said she. "We go back. Two miles in the direction of Sherton."

"The truth is you ought not to Edgar."

"Then do you hasten on, I am not in the least afraid. I

recognise, now part of the wood ~~the spot~~ we are in, & I can find my way back quite easily. I'll tell my father that we have made it up — I wish I had not kept our meetings so private. for it may vex him a little to know I have been seeing you. He is getting old & irritable; that was why I did not. "Good-bye."

"But — as for I cannot possibly catch the train, I must stay at the Earl of Wessex to-night, I think it would be safer for you to let me take care of you."

"But what will my father think has become of me! He does not know in the least where I am — he thinks I only went into the garden for a few minutes."

"He will surely guess — somebody has seen me for certain. I'll go all the way back with you to-morrow."

"But that great newly done-up place the Earl of Wessex!"

"If you are so very particular about the publicity I will stay at the Three Tuns."

"O no — it is not that I am particular — but I have not a brush or comb or anything!"

Chapter XLVIII

All the evening Melbury had been continually coming to his door saying "I wonder where in the world that girl is! Never in all my born days did I know her bide out like this. She surely said she was going into the garden to get some parsley."

⁂ His discovery simply added an item of fact without helping their conjectures; but Mellbury's indefinite alarm was greatly increased when, holding a candle to the ground, he saw in the teeth of the instrument some frayings from Grace's clothing.

⊕ ["]Was he holding her light?" said Mellbury. ["]Well – rather," said the man. ["]Did she walk lame?" ["]Well 'tis true her head hung over towards him a bit." [Creedle groaned tragically

Wilson

the parsley-bed,

Mellony searched the garden, & the orchard, but could find no trace of her, & then he made inquiries at the cottages of such of his workmen as had not gone to bed, avoiding Jangs's because he knew they young people were to rise early to leave. In these inquiries one of the men's wives somewhat incautiously let out the fact that she had heard a scream from in the wood, though from which direction she could not say.

This set Mellony's fears on end. He told the men to light lanterns, & headed by himself they started, Creedle insisting following at the last moment with quite a bundle of grapnels & ropes which he could not be persuaded to leave behind, & the company being joined by the hollow-turner & the farmer man who kept the cider-house as they went along

14 [They explored scanned the precincts of the village, but, curiously enough, did not and in a short time; light on upon the man-trap. No intelligence of any kind was gained till they met a woodman of Delborough, who said that he had seen a lady answering to the description the latter gave of Grace, walking through the wood with a gentleman; arm round her waist in the direction of Shenton. Mellony, not suspecting the presence of fairies, coupled this account with the man-trap & the screams; he could not be persuaded but that some one was carrying off his daughter by force & stealth after having decoyed her, though that she could not be much blamed was obvious. Accordingly they bore away followed the road towards to the town, shouting as they went, & in due course emerged upon the highway.

X up the street. The hairdresser who had despoiled Marty of her tresses was standing at his door, & they duly put inquiries to him. "And how's Little Hintock folk by now!" he said before replying. "Never have I been over there since one winter night some three year ago — & then I lost myself finding it. How can ye live in such a one-eyed place? Great Hintock is bad enough — but Little Hintock — The bats & owls would drive me melancholy-mad! It took two days to raise my spirits to their true pitch again after that night I went there. Mr Melbury Sir, as a man that's put by money, why not retire & live here, & see something of the world?"

Nearing Sherton-Abbas the previous information was confirmed by other strollers, though the arm had disappeared from Newness of the ladys in these later accounts. At last they were to near Sherton. Met Melbury informed his faithful followers that he did not wish to drag them further at so late an hour, since he could go on alone & inquire if the woman who had been seen were really Grace. But they would not leave him alone in his anxiety, & trudged onward till the lamplight from the town began to illuminate their fronts. At the entrance to the High Street they got first scent of the pursued, but complied with the new condition that the lady in the costume described had been going up the street alone.

"Faith - I believe she's mesmerised, or walking in her sleep!" said Melbury

However, the identity of this woman with Grace was by no means certain; but they plodded on. The responses at last given by him to their queries by them guided them straight to the building that offered the best accommodation in Sherton - having been enlarged contemporaneously with the construction of the railway - namely, the Earl of Wessex Hotel.

Leaving the others without Melbury made prompt inquiry here. His alarm was lessened, though his perplexity was increased, when he received a brief reply that such a lady was in the house.

"Do you know if she is my daughter?" asked Melbury.

The waiter did not, for

"Do you know the lady's name?"

Of this, too, the household was ignorant, ~~the new~~ the hotel having been taken by brand-new people from a distance. They knew the gentleman very well by sight, & had not thought it necessary to ask him to enter his name.

"Oh – the gentleman appears again now," said Mellroy hurriedly. "Well – I want to see the lady" he declared.

A message was taken up, & after some delay the shape of Grace appeared descending round the bend of the staircase, looking as if she lived there, but in other respects rather guilty & frightened.

"Why – what the name –" began her father. "I thought you went out to get parsley!"

"Oh yes – I did – but

"Oh it is all right," said Grace in a flurried whisper. "I am not alone here. I am here with Edgar. It is entirely owing to an accident, father."

"Edgar – an accident? How does he come here? I thought he was two a hundred mile off!"

"Yes – so he is – I mean, he had got a beautiful practice two hundred miles off – he has bought it with his own money – some that came to him. But he travelled here, & I was nearly caught in a man-trap, & that's how it is I am here. We were just thinking of sending a messenger to let you know"

Mellroy did not seem to be particularly enlightened by this explanation.

"You were caught in a man-trap!" "Yes – my dress was – that's how it arose." "Oh."

"Edgar is upstairs in our sitting room," she went on. "He would not mind seeing you, I am sure."

"O faith, I don't want to see him – I have seen him too often a'ready..... I'll see him another time, perhaps, if 'tis to oblige 'ee."

"He came to see me – he wanted to consult me about this large partnership I spoke of – as it is very promising."

"Oh – I am glad to hear it", said Melbury drily.

A pause ensued, during which the inquiring whitey-brown faces & clothes of Melbury's companions appeared in the doorway.

"Then baint you coming home with us?" he asked.

"I – I think not," said Grace blushing.

"H'm – very well – you are your own mistress," he returned in tones which seemed to assert otherwise. "Good-night." And Melbury retreated towards the door.

"Don't be angry, father," she said following him a few steps. "I have done it for the best."

"I am not angry – though it is true I have been a little misled in this. However, good-night. I must get home along."

He left the hotel, not without relief; for to be under the eyes of strangers while he conversed with his lost child had embarrassed him much. His search-party, too, had looked awkward there – having rushed to the task of investigation, some in their shirt-sleeves, & others in their leather-aprons, & all much stained. just as they had come from their work of barking, & not in their Sherton marketing attire; while Creedle, with his ropes & grapnels

& air of impending tragedy, had added melancholy to gawkiness.

"Now, neighbours", said Mellory on ~~reboon~~ joining them, "as it is getting late we'll leg it home again as fast as we can. I ought to tell you that there has been some mistake — some arrangement entered into between Mr. & Mrs. Tillyfiers which I didn't quite understand — an important practice in the Midland Counties had has come to him, which made it necessary for her to join him to-night. That's all it was — & I'm sorry I dragged you out."

"Well", said the hollow-turner, "here we are six mile from home, & night-time, & not a hoss or soul — so she says. ~~sorted~~ creature thing to our name. I say we'll have a ~~bit & drop~~ drop mossel o' summat to strengthen our nerves for the afore we vamp all the way back again? My throat's as dry as a kex. What d'ye say so's?"

They all consented in the need for this course, & proceeded to the antique & lampless back street in which the Three Tuns red curtain of ~~f~~ was the only radiant object. As soon as they had stumbled down into the room Mellory ordered them to be served, when they made themselves comfortable by the long table, & stretched out their legs upon the herringboned sanded floor. Mellory himself, restless as usual, walked to the door while he waited for them, & looked up & down the street.

"I'd give her a good shaking if she were my maid, pretending to go out in garden, & leading folk a twelve mile traipse that have

got to get up at five o'clock to-morrow," said a bark-ripper who, not working regularly for Melbury, could afford to indulge in strong opinions.

"I don't speak so warm as that," said the bottom-turner, "but if 'tis right for couples to make a country talk about their separating, & excite the neighbours, & then make fools of 'em like this, why, I haven't stood upon one leg for five-&-twenty years".

All his listeners knew that when he alluded to his foot-lathe in these enigmatic terms the speaker meant to be impersonal; & Creedle chimed in with, "ah, young women do wax wanton in these days! Why couldn't she ha' bode with her father, & been faithful". Poor Creedle was thinking of his old employer.

"But this deceiving of folks is nothing unusual in matrimony," said Farmer Bawtree. "I knowed a man & wife — faith, I don't mind owning, as there's no strangers here, that the pair were my own son & daughter-in-law — but ever was own relations — they'd be at it that hot one hour that you'd hear the poker, & the tongs, & the bellows, & the warming-pan, flee across house with the movements of their vengeance; & the next hour you'd hear 'em singing "The Spotted Cow" together as peaceable as two holy yes — twins; & very good voices they had, & would strike in like professional ballet-singers & one another's support in the high notes."

"And I knowed a woman, & her husband o'her went away for five-&-twenty year," said the bark-ripper. "And one night he came home when

she was sitting by the fire, & thereupon he sat down himself on the other side of the chimney-corner. "Well," says she, 'have ye ~~brought~~ got any news?' — 'Don't know as I have,' says he. 'Have you?' — 'No,' says she, 'except that my daughter by my second husband was married last month, which was a year after I was made a widow by him.' — 'Oh — Anything else?' he says. — 'No,' says she. And there they sat one on each side of that chimney-corner, & were found by the neighbours sound. ~~fell~~ asleep in their chairs, ~~not being able to raise no eyes~~ not having known what to talk about at all."

"Well, I don't care who the man is," said John Upjohn, "they required a good deal to talk about, and that's true. It won't be the same with these."

"No — He is such a projick, you see. And she is a wonderful scholar, too!"

"Ah — what women do know nowadays! You can't deceive 'em as you could in my time," observed the hollow-turner.

"What they knowed then was not small," said Upjohn. "Always a good deal more than the men. Why, when I went courting my wife that is now, the ~~trouble~~ skillfulness that she would take show in keeping me on her pretty side as she walked was beyond all belief — perhaps you've noticed that she's got a pretty side to her face as well as a plain one?"

"I can't say I've noticed it particular much," said the hollow-turner blandly.

"Well," continued Upjohn, not disconcerted, "she has. All women

under the sun be prettier one side than t'other. And, as I was saying, the pains she would take to make me walk on the pretty side were unending! I warrant that whether we were going with the sun or against the sun, uphill or downhill, in wind or in teeth, that wart of hers was always towards the hedge, & that dimple towards me. There was I, too simple to see her wheelings & turnings; & she so artful, though two years younger, that she could lead me with a cotton thread, like a blind ram; for [illegible] that was in the mild climate of our courtship.... Ho – I don't think the women have got cleverer, for they was never otherwise".

"How many stages (in courtships) may there be) Mr Upjohn?" inquired a youth – son of one of the bark-strippers.

"Five – from the coolest to the hottest was five in mine".

"Can ye give us the chronicle of 'em, Mr Upjohn?"

"Yes – I could. I could easily. But 'tis quite unnecessary. They'll come by nater, too, for your good at present. Mrs Fitzpiers can lead the doctor as your mis'ess could lead you," the hollow-turner answered. "She's got him quite tame. But how long it will last I can't say. I happened to be setting a wire at the top of my garden one night when he met her on the other side of the hedge; & the way she queened it, & fanned, & kept that poor feller at a distance was enough to freeze your blood. I should never have supposed it of such a girl."

Melbury now returned to the room, & the men having declared

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"How many climates (in courtships) may there be, Mr Upjohn?" inquired a youth - son of one of the bank-rippers.

"Five - from the coolest to the hottest - leastwise there was five in mine."

"Can ye give us the chronicle of 'em, Mr Upjohn?"

"Yes - I could. I could easily. But 'tis quite unnecessary. They'll come by nater, too, for your good, by nater, soon enough".

"Mrs Pitzpiers can lead the doctor as your mis'ess could you," at present the hollow-turner remarked. "She's got him quite tame. But how long it will last I can't say. I happened to be setting a wire at the top of my garden one night when he met her on the other side of the hedge; & the way she queened it, & fanned, & kept that poor feller at a distance was enough to freeze yer blood. I should never have supposed it of such a girl".

Melbury now returned to the room, & the men having declared

themselves refreshed they all started on the homeward journey, which was ~~not~~ by no means cheerless under the rays of the high moon. Having to walk the whole distance they came by a foot path rather shorter than the highway, though difficult except to those who knew the country well. This brought them by way of Great Hintock; & as they passed the churchyard they observed as they talked a motionless figure standing by the gate.

"I think it was Marty South," said the hollow-tunned parenthetically.

I think 'twas a was always a lonely maid," said Upjohn. And they passed on homeward, & thought of the matter no more.

It was Marty, as they had supposed. That evening had been the particular one of the week on which Grace & Giles usually had been accustomed to privately deposit flowers on Giles's grave, & this was the first occasion since his death eight months earlier on which Grace had failed to keep her appointment. Marty had waited in the road just outside Little Hintock, where her fellow pilgrim had been wont to join her, till she was weary; & at last, thinking that Grace had missed her & gone on alone, she followed the way to Great Hintock, but saw no Grace in front of her. It got later, & Marty continued her walk till she reached the churchyard gate; but still no Grace. Yet her sense of comradeship would not allow her to go on to the grave alone, & still thinking the delay had been unavoidable, she stood there

~~Lucy~~, with her little basket of flowers in her clasped hands, & her feet chilled by the damp ground, till more than two hours had passed. She then heard the footsteps of Melbury's men, who presently passed on their return from the search. In the silence of the night Marty could not help hearing fragments of their conversation, from which she acquired a general idea of what had occurred, & where Miss Fitzpiers then was.

Immediately they had dropped down the hill she entered the church-yard, going to a secluded corner behind the bushes, where rose the ~~tall white~~ unadorned stone that marked the last bed of Giles Winterborne. As this too solitary & silent girl stood there in the moonlight, a slim straight ~~little~~ figure, clothed in a plaidless gown, the contours of womanhood so undeveloped as to be scarcely perceptible, the marks of poverty & toil effaced by the misty hour, she touched sublimity at points, & looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attributes of sex for the loftier quality of ~~pure anemism~~ abstract humanism. She stooped down & cleared away the withered flowers that Grace thereby had laid there the previous week, & put ~~placed~~ her fresh ones in their place.

Bell

"Now, my own own love," she whispered, you are mine, and ~~e~~ on'y mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died. But I — whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, & whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee. Whenever I plant the

young Larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted;
& whenever I split a fine gad, & whenever I turn the cider-
wring I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget
your name let me forget (home earth & heaven....
-..... But no, no, my Love, I never
can forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good
things!"

The End.

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